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GABRIELLE APLIN
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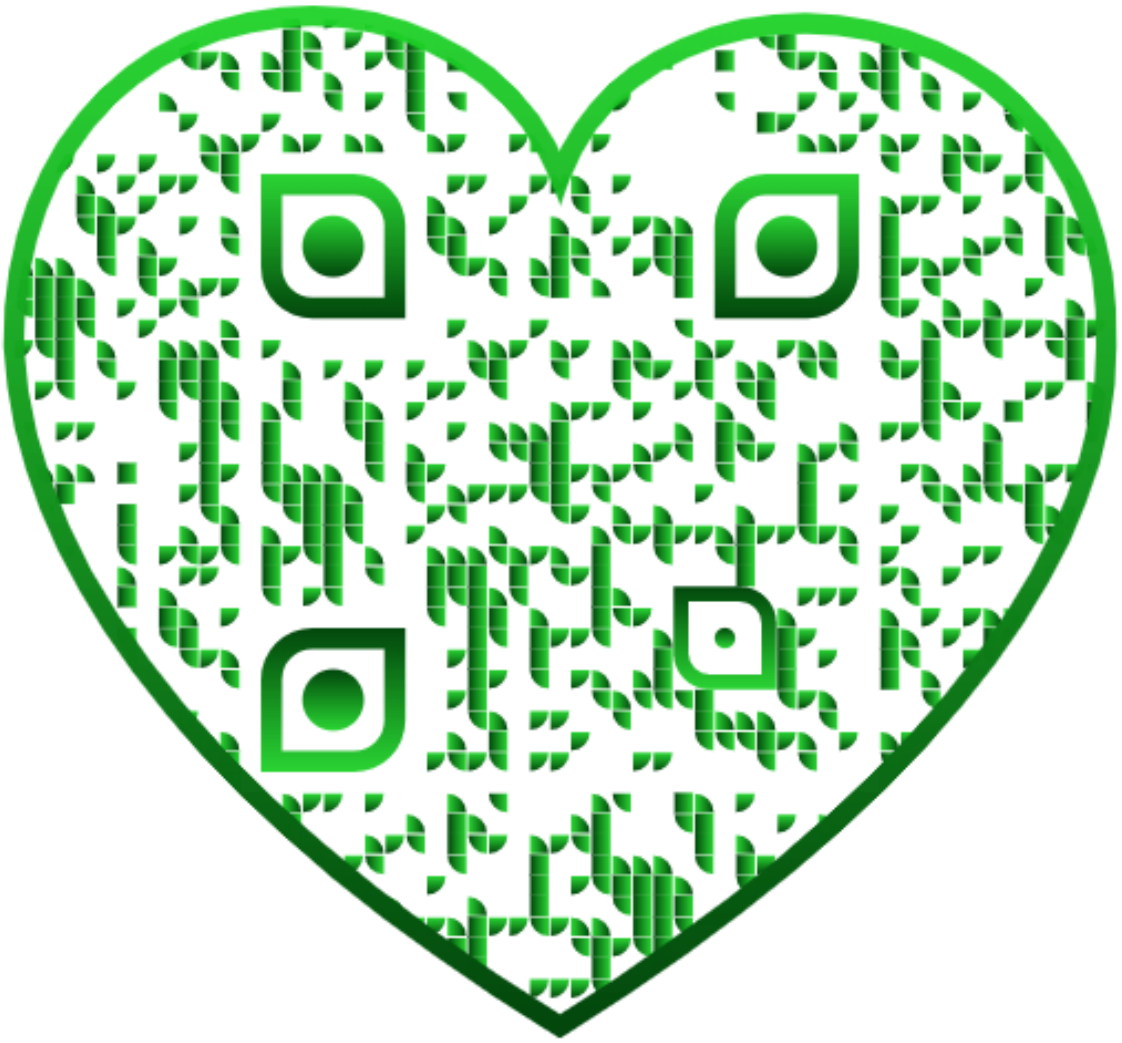

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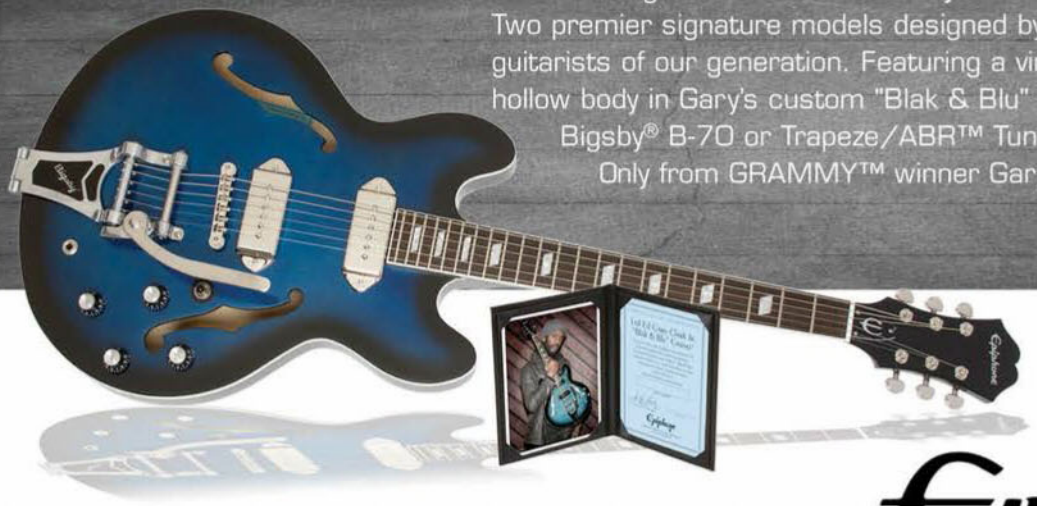

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Who's better? Who's best...

Although it was hard to think of ourselves as lucky amidst the mud and rain of Glastonbury 2007, in hindsight my friends and I were privileged to witness an incredible Sunday-night headline performance from The Who. As tired, cold and soaked through as we all were, there was no shortage of heat and energy emanating from the Pyramid Stage, thanks to a stunning guitar display from Pete Townshend. A rare mixture of absolute control and thrilling abandon, Townshend's mastery of the Stratocaster made the vast majority of other performers that weekend seem pedestrian in comparison, even if many of them were less than half The Who legend's age.

Aside from the showmanship and talent on display, it was impossible to ignore just how good Townshend's much-windmilled Strats sounded; it was a year later, during Jack White's set with The Raconteurs, that I next heard anything nearly as seismic from a combination of wood, strings and hot glass bottles. The Who, of course, headlined Glastonbury again this year, but most accounts suggest that their set at Hyde Park's British Summer Time festival, also in late June, was better. *G&B* was there and, thanks to Townshend's long-time guitar tech Alan Rogan, we were granted an exclusive access-all-areas tour of every last inch of the band's equipment; our special 10-page feature commences on p14.

Elsewhere in the mag, we have added a few new twists to the usual mix of reviews, artist interviews, vintage gear, DIY and tuition this month, including the first in a brand new series of chord-based guitar lessons. The opening instalment goes right back to basics, but even the most experienced players amongst you might find there's something to learn. See you next month...

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Turn to **page 54** to take advantage of this month's special *Guitar & Bass* subscription offer.

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THIS MONTH'S EXPERTS...

DAVE HUNTER

Dave Hunter is a writer and musician who has worked in the US and the UK. A former editor of this title, he is the author of *The Guitar Amp Handbook*, *Guitar Effects Pedals*, *Amped* and *The Fender Telecaster*. Check out his new column on page 10.

HUW PRICE

Huw spent 16 years as a pro audio engineer working with the likes of David Bowie, Primal Scream and NIck Cave. His book *Recording Guitar & Bass* was published in 2002, sparking a career in guitar journalism. He also builds and maintains guitars, amps and FX.

RICHARD PURVIS

A reformed drummer, Richard has been gigging for over 20 years as a guitarist and bassist, and working as a music journalist for almost as long. He also composes music for television, and is legally married to his 1966 Gibson Melody Maker.

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This month's happenings...

LOOK OUT FOR Guitar COVERAGE LATER IN THE YEAR

THE QUEST FOR THE HOLY GRAIL

Huge collection of fine hand-made guitars goes on show in Berlin

The second Holy Grail Guitar Show, taking place over the weekend of Saturday 31 October and Sunday 1 November at Berlin's Estrel Hotel and Convention Centre, is the world's only international luthier-driven guitar show.

The limelight of this event shines squarely on some of the finest hand-built custom guitars on the planet, made by some of the best luthiers from around the world. Following the success of last year's show, 115 guitar makers have already signed up for the 2015 incarnation – including several from the United Kingdom.

Not only will visitors have the opportunity to see what this worldwide line-up of guitar builders have to offer, they will also be able to get hands-on with hundreds of boutique guitars. From iconic designs to more alternative creations, there will be dedicated headphone stations and sound cabins, fitted out with an array of classic amps, in which to try out the guitars. The event will also host a range of showcases, lectures, seminars and concerts featuring endorsing artists.

Described as an art exhibition with the added element of music, the Holy Grail Guitar Show is a non-profit-making event, which provides a platform for the attending guitar makers and funding for the European Guitar Builders Association, who are also the organisers of the show. For more information, go to **www.holygrailguitarshow.com**

See p38 for our JARED JAMES NICHOLS feature

Joe Lester

FRIENDS REUNITED

Aldrich joins up with his old mate Glenn for world tour

Glenn Hughes has enlisted former Whitesnake guitarist Doug Aldrich for his upcoming solo world tour, which includes 10 UK dates.

Hughes will be playing material from throughout his lengthy career on the tour, including songs from his spells in Trapeze, Deep Purple, Black Country Communion and California Breed – alongside selections from his solo catalogue.

Aldrich, who is also a previous member of Dio and is currently in US supergroup Revolution Saints, replaces Hughes' regular guitarist Soren Andersen for the tour.

"I've known Doug from his time with Ronnie Dio, and of course Whitesnake," says Hughes. "Doug played with me on a couple of Purple songs at a festival the night before Ronnie passed away. We had great chemistry, and talked about playing together again when schedules permitted." Support for the tour comes from American blues-rock player Jared James Nichols, who recently released his debut album *Old Glory & The Wild Revival*.

The UK leg of the tour of starts on 17 October in Southampton, ending at London's Electric Ballroom on 1 November.

Full UK dates: **17 October** *Southampton Engine Rooms*; **19 October** *Norwich Waterfront*; **20 October** *Newcastle Tyne Theatre*; **22 October** *Belfast The Limelight*; **23 October** *Glasgow The Garage*; **25 October** *Holmfirth The Picturedome*; **26 October** *Bilston Robin*; **28 October** *York Fibbers*; **29 October** *Manchester Club Academy*; **1 November** *London Electric Ballroom*. See **www.glennhughes.com** for ticket details.

WIN! A STRYMON DIG DUAL DIGITAL DELAY PEDAL WORTH £279!

Enter our competition for a chance to win this amazing dual-delay pedal courtesy of Strymon's UK distributor MusicPsych

The DIG is the latest pedal to be released by the Californian manufacturer that brought us the incredible BigSky reverb pedal, the TimeLine delay modeller and numerous others.

It's a delay unit that emulates the rackmounted sounds of the 80s, and has five rhythmic subdivisions that can be applied to the dual delays. What's really clever about the DIG is it allows you to have two separate repeat times simultaneously, enabling you to get the sound of tape delays with multiple heads, or create ambient washes and play clean passages over the top. We reviewed the DIG in *G&B*, concluding: "Versatile and unique, the DIG proves you don't need faux-analogue wobbliness in order to create musical delay effects with bags of character."

If you'd like to add this awesome creative effects processor to your pedalboard, simply email your answer to the following question to **guitarandbass@anthem-publishing.com** to be in with a chance of winning:

Q What is the name of Strymon's tape echo emulator?

A BlueSky **B** El Capistan **C** Orbit

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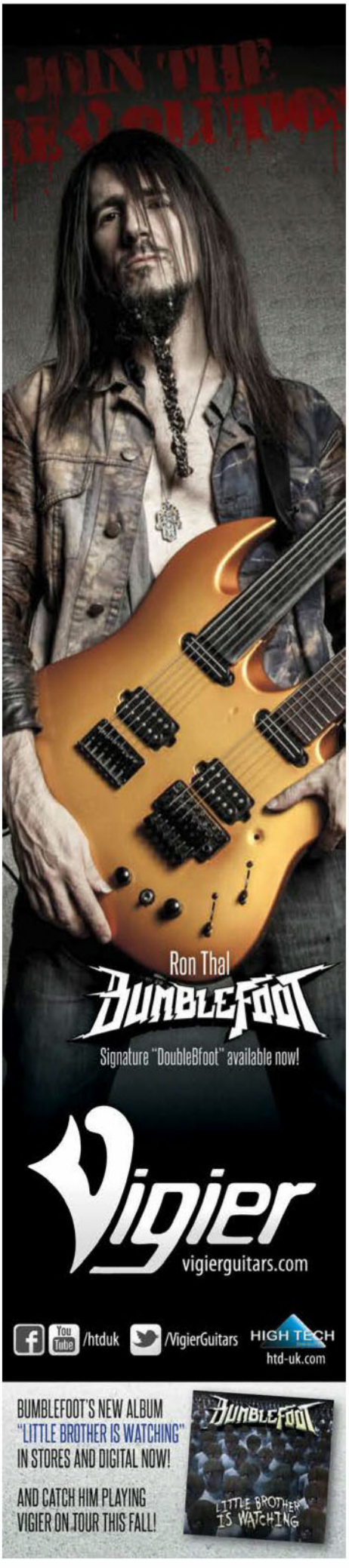
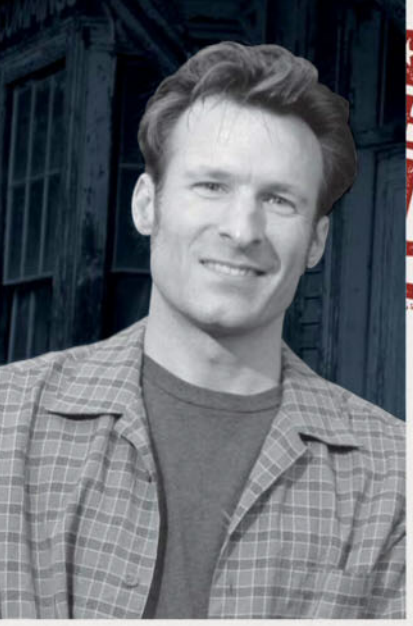




LETTERS FROM AMERICA

THORN TO BE WILD

In a brand new regular column for *G&B*, **DAVE HUNTER** checks out boutique exotica from across the pond before it reaches UK shores. First up is the Thorn Artisan Limited Series 3...

DAVE HUNTER

Dave Hunter is a writer and musician who has worked in the US and the UK. A former editor of this title, he is the author of numerous books including *The Guitar Amp Handbook*, *Guitar Effects Pedals*, *Amped* and *The Fender Telecaster*.

I have sometimes experienced a sort of inverse relationship between the amount of precision a guitar maker brings to their work and the character evident in the results. Occasionally, a guitar rendered with a high degree of technical achievement can come off a little 'cold'. Not so the creations of Ron Thorn. I've had four of this California-based small-shop maker's guitars in my hands over the past two years, and in each case I can say I've never held a more faultlessly executed instrument. And each was different: one a set-neck, flame-topped LP-meets-Tele rocker; another a bolt-neck Californian hotrod; yet another an original take on the 335 theme; and now this guitar from Thorn's Artisan Limited Series 3, a Gretschified pearl-topped twang machine with retro cool to burn.

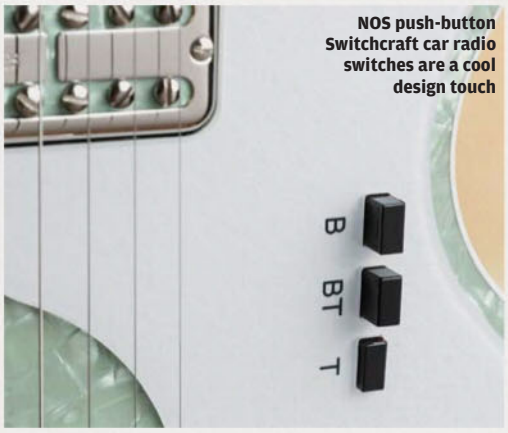
The double-cut early-60s Gretsch Duo Jet inspiration is clear, but there are so many original touches

As immaculately put together as each of these guitars has been, each has exuded a muse-like charm that inspires you to just keep playing, with a flawless playability that makes it easy to do so. How do Ron and his small team achieve all this, and at far-from-ridiculous prices, too? In large part, I believe, it just comes from knowing their craft, and having pride in getting things right. Put differently, think of marrying the high-end watchmaker's level of precision, the custom cabinet maker's attention to detail, and the visual artist's uncompromising sense of aesthetics and applying the formula to producing electric guitars, and you're beginning to grasp what Thorn achieves.

Ron Thorn was born into a family of carpenters and car fanatics in Southern California, and began learning guitar making in his early teens. Prior to producing instruments under his own brand, he specialised in inlay, and formed Thorn Custom Inlay with his father in 1993. Thorn became the sole inlay artist for the Fender Custom Shop by the mid-1990s, and remains so today. Eventually, the company segued into guitar production for itself, alongside Fender work, initially producing elaborate custom guitars, then introducing short-run lines of production models, of which this Artisan Limited is one. Hence the Series 3 tag: one of seven guitars produced in this run, this Artisan Limited is tied to its brethren by the use of a pearl top in Surf Green, finished – as are its Raven Black back, sides and neck – in thin nitrocellulose lacquer (others in Series 3 have Silver Pearl, Silver Blue Pearl and Black Pearl tops).

Outwardly, the double-cut early-60s Gretsch Duo Jet inspiration is clear, but there are so many original touches in the Artisan Limited as to render it a very different guitar, while still capturing plenty of Gretschy character for those looking to swing that way. When quizzed about whether the pearloid veneer would impede the guitar's natural resonance at all, Thorn told me that the sheet was about the

The neck pickup is a TV Jones Classic



NOS push-button Switchcraft car radio switches are a cool design touch

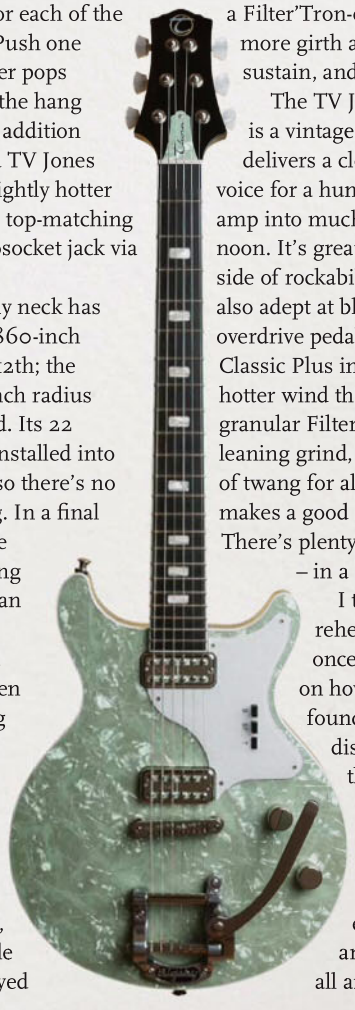
The pearloid adornments extend to the truss-rod cover

thickness of a couple of coats of lacquer, so the resultant overall finish is still thinner than those applied by many builders. The sonic results ring true to his claims, too, but more of that later.

The body is made from chambered Honduran mahogany with a thin mahogany 'soft top' – that is, a gentle 50-inch radius arch across from the bass side to the treble. The result enhances playing comfort, creating a natural forearm contour on one side, while helping the push-button switches to fall away from the line of the pick stroke on the other, so they aren't in the way of your playing, as you might first imagine. And as for those switches: the first thing you're likely to notice after your eyes adjust to the three-dimensional swirl of the top, they are actually NOS push-button Switchcraft car radio switches (several Thorn models carry deft automotive-inspired touches), one for each of the three traditional selector positions. Push one to make a new selection and the other pops up; in use, they're a lot easier to get the hang of than you might first imagine – in addition to looking superb. The pickups are a TV Jones Classic in the neck position and a slightly hotter Classic Plus in the bridge, both with top-matching pearloid inserts, routed to an Electrosocket jack via master volume and tone controls.

The glued-in Honduran mahogany neck has a rounded C profile that measures .860-inch at the first fret and .950-inch at the 12th; the bound ebony fingerboard has a 12-inch radius and "Chicklet" inlays in 50s celluloid. Its 22 Jescar 6150 (tall-medium) frets are installed into slots that stop short of the binding, so there's no chance of a sharp tang while playing. In a final touch of synchronicity, the 10-degree back-angled headstock has a matching pearloid truss-rod cover, along with an elegant mother-of-pearl 'T' logo and locking Sperzel tuners with pearloid buttons. The Bigsby tailpiece has been modified by Thorn for string loading through holes in the back bar, eliminating the need to pre-bend your strings and fit their ball-ends to the fiddly posts that normally reside there. All in, this Artisan Limited weighs around 7lbs.

Unplugged, the guitar has a lively, loud ring, with plenty of bright jangle and a meaty, round sonic core. I played the Artisan Limited extensively through two custom-made tube amps – a Voxy dual-EL84 combo with a 12-inch Celestion Cream and a JTM45-inspired head with a 2x12 Port City cab – and was extremely impressed. It does much of what you'd expect from a Filter'Tron-equipped Duo Jet, sure, but with more girth at its centre, significantly better sustain, and a more consistent performance.



The TV Jones Classic in the neck position is a vintage-spec'd low-wind affair, and delivers a clear, crisp, yet moderately juicy voice for a humbucker, and doesn't drive either amp into much breakup until the gain hits about noon. It's great for anything from the jazzier side of rockabilly to moodier pop ballads, but also adept at blues or classic rock with a good overdrive pedal or enough amp overdrive. The Classic Plus in the bridge position is a slightly hotter wind that still has that zingy, slightly granular Filter'Tron bite, but a bit more rock-leaning grind, too. It excels at a nastier breed of twang for alt-country or psychobilly, but also makes a good indie or alt-rock lead pickup. There's plenty to love – and even more to adore – in a guitar that plays so effortlessly.

I took this Artisan Limited to a rehearsal with an indie band and – once they'd all stopped commenting on how great the guitar looked – we found it delivered a trenchant, distinctive tone that cut brilliantly through the four-piece mix, and applied itself equally well to clean-toned atmospheric ballads as to raunchier gained-up punk-pop. This is another great example of what Thorn can do, and an extremely cool guitar from all angles.

KEY FEATURES

Thorn Artisan Limited Series 3

- **PRICE** $3,740 direct (approx. £2,397, plus shipping and any duties)
- **BODY** Honduran mahogany, semi-hollow, with an arched mahogany top
- **NECK** Glued-in Honduran mahogany, medium/fat C profile
- **FINGERBOARD** Ebony, bound with 50s celluloid inlays, 12" radius
- **FRETS** 22 nickel-silver Jescar 6150 (medium-tall)
- **PICKUPS** TV Jones Classic (neck) & Classic Plus (bridge)
- **ELECTRONICS** Push-button selector switches, master volume and tone
- **FINISH** Surf Green pearloid top and Raven Black back and neck, in thin nitrocellulose lacquer
- **HARDWARE** Sperzel locking tuners, Bigsby vibrato, tune-o-matic bridge
- **STRINGS** D'Addario .010"-.046"
- **CASE** TKL fitted hardshell case included
- **CONTACT** Thorn Custom Guitars **www.thornguitars.com**

THE POWER
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LONG LIVE ROCK

On the eve of The Who's British Summer Time show at Hyde Park, we were granted exclusive access to every inch of their live rig – read on to find out how Pete Townshend gets *that* sound...

Story and photography **Steve Clarke**

Teenage angst, blistering R&B, pioneering use of feedback, equipment demolition, seminal live performances, concept albums of ferocious ambition... The Who's achievements are many, and the one common factor that has propelled them for more than half a century is rock 'n' roll's finest right hand: that of Peter Townshend, arguably also the owner of popular music's keenest brain and the creative force behind a group that remain one of the world's most popular live draws. Anyone who has seen The Who recently will testify that even at 70, Townshend has lost none of the fire that's made him such a compelling performer over the years.

Having also worked with The Rolling Stones, Joe Walsh, Eric Clapton and George Harrison, there's very little that Townshend's guitar tech, Alan Rogan, hasn't seen. We meet at Hyde Park's Gate 10, as Alan has agreed to allow *G&B* a close look at the guitars used by his current employer, ahead of The Who's headline peformance to 70,000 people at British Summer Time festival.

It soon becomes apparent that preparations for a gig of this magnitude leave nothing to chance. As Alan leads me to the festival's Great Oak Stage, you would be forgiven for thinking that NASA is about to launch a space probe: there's high-tech equipment everywhere and security is tight, but it's par for the course in the run-up to a performance by one of the world's greatest live bands.

I am taken immediately to a huge flightcase that contains eight Fender Stratocasters encased in thick foam supports that pull out like drawers. The first guitar I see is the Torino Red Strat (number 4) that Townshend has been using since 1989. He typically has four to six more of these, and all are Eric Clapton signature models. There are numbers on the back of each guitar to indicate which instrument Townshend will use during certain points in the set, and for capo use. We walk over to a workbench that is full of tools and lay down the Strat.

A Peterson Strobe Center 5000 tuner is situated in front of us; there are no pitch pipes here: this is serious tuning tech for the big boys! In addition, there's a small Vox amp with an eight-inch speaker for Alan to plug the guitar into.

Underneath the bench are plenty of small drawers, with just about everything a top guitar tech could need. As Alan strings the guitar up, he tells me that Townshend now uses 10–48 Ernie Ball RPS Slinkys. Alan removes the bottom string from a 10-46 set and replaces it with a 48, which he says Pete prefers. The guitar is basically a stock Eric Clapton model, with the notable addition of a Fishman Powerbridge. A volume control sits behind the treble side of the bridge and controls the output of the piezo 'acoustic' signal. Alan was directly involved in this layout and the components, which send a stereo output to a Pete Cornish splitter box that also includes the signal from the guitar's Gold Lace Sensor pickups.

On the back of the guitar is an EMG preamp, which boosts the signal from the 'acoustic' side, that goes directly into the board. This combination provides an unbelievably good sound, with such punch and acoustic clarity: it's the best I've heard. Out front, near Pete's monitor, there's a footswitch conveniently labelled 'Big Fat >

Townshend has been playing this Torino Red Strat since 1989

The Fishman Power Bridge and its volume control

Switch' which enables him to shift between the sound combinations. The EMG preamp is adjustable and accessible through the back of the guitar, using four trim pots: a three-band EQ and a volume. It's actually a simple but incredibly effective set-up. I look at the scratchplate and see blood splatters from the Dublin gig a couple of nights before. Alan tells me: "Pete often cuts his fingers because he just goes for it!"

This guitar has a 42mm nut width, and the slots for the strings have been cut impeccably – as you would expect on one of Townshend's guitars. On the top horn of the guitar's alder body, I see many scratches on the surface in the area where he plays most of his fast rhythm parts. The Gold Lace Sensor pickups deliver a midrange emphasis with a resistance of 5.8k, complementing the Fishman's piezo tone perfectly.

Lace Sensors

Designed by Don Lace and launched in 1985, Lace Sensor pickups are equipped with a 'radiant field barrier' system, that surrounds both the coil and magnets and helps reduce 50/60 cycle hum. True single coils, the idea behind Lace Sensors is that the barriers help to concentrate the magentic field, meaning that lower-strength magnets can be used. Weaker magnets mean less string pull which in theory translates into an increase in sustain and more accurate pitch and intonation. The Lace Sensor Golds, which date back to the first-generation Eric Clapton Signature Strats that were introduced around 1988, are Townshend's preferred Strat pickups and are vintage-voiced with a great midrange.

> "I look at the scratchplate and see blood splatters from the Dublin gig a couple of nights before"

The guitar is finished in a thin skin nitrocellulose lacquer, which allows more resonance than a modern poly finish and contibutes to the acoustic quality. The scale length is the expected 648mm, with 22 frets and Sperzel locking machineheads. The first Clapton Strat prototypes (1986-87) had 21 frets and a 25dB midrange boost.

The bridge width is 52mm on two pivot screw posts, with two trem springs around the back. The vibrato is set for a semitone pull-back, and the action is perhaps high for many Strat players, but for Townshend's playing technique and power you wouldn't want it any lower. Big Bends Nut Sauce is put into the slots before Alan strings the guitar up. Once he has pre-stretched the strings, and after locking them, he then tightens the machinehead screw to keep everything as tight as possible.

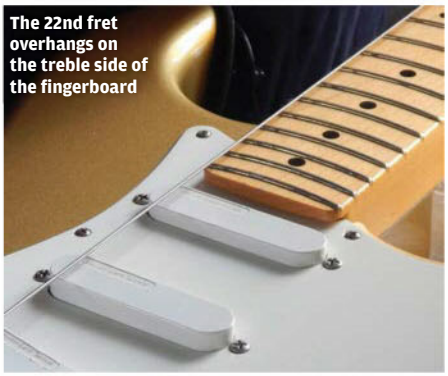
The strings are not cut after passing through the machineheads' string posts until the next day's final tuning has taken place. Early versions of Townshend's EC Strats had a Kahler locking vibrato, but now everything looks a lot tidier: I never did like the locking nut stuff!

The frets have a little wear, but don't need a fret dress. The bridge saddles on the Fishman have the top E saddle set lowest, with the B slightly higher than would be expected – with the G and D set the same. The A is set lower, with the bottom E slightly angled: it is quite interesting looking at this layout because it reflects the style and feel of the player. I notice that from about the 17th to the 22nd fret area, the edge of the maple fingerboard is darker, and has worn through where the pick hits it when Pete is playing rhythm parts.

Candy Apple Red Strat

Next out of the drawer is a Candy Apple Red Strat with number 8 on the back: again a Clapton signature model with Gold Lace Sensors. It has the mid boost and TBX tone circuit and a three-ply white/black/white pickguard. This guitar was used on the Quadrophenia And More tour during 2012-13.

This number 8 Strat was also used for the Dublin gig two nights before, and it too has

Alan Rogan restrings Pete's Shoreline Gold Strat

The 22nd fret overhangs on the treble side of the fingerboard

The Shoreline Gold Strat has a Fishman Powerbridge VMV

Pete's blood on the scratchplate and strings at the end of the fingerboard. The edge of the fingerboard at the bass-side 19th fret has some wear, but is not as worn as the Torino Red Strat. Scratches are still evident on the lacquer above the neck pickup and the top edge of the guitar, where Pete's arm would rest, has some lacquer chips, but the guitar is actually in good condition considering the owner's reputation! Sperzel locking machineheads with staggered tuning post heights are fitted with a butterfly string tree for the B and E strings. The G string's chrome machinehead has been replaced and a satin-finished tuner has been fitted in its place. Some damage is evident on the headstock, but it is not extensive.

On the back of the guitar, there is a Fender Custom Shop four-bolt neck plate, that has a serial number starting with CZ. The C represents Custom Shop and the Z represents the decade, meaning zero – so appearing after 2000. The bi-flex adjustment hole can be seen below the serial number. Once again, the action is quite high, while the frets are vintage-style. Townshend also used a Candy Apple Red Strat with a single-ply, white scratchplate around 2007. In 2004, all Custom Shop Clapton Strats that were both Team and Masterbuilt used a standard tone control instead of a TBX tone circuit, which was reinstated around 2009 but only on the Team-built versions.

The Candy Apple Red Strat that Pete used throughout the Quadrophenia And More tour

Shoreline Gold Strat

This is yet another EC model, that has the same modifications with a Fishman Powerbridge VMV (Vintage Mount Vibrato). "Pete has started using this one again after a short lay-off," Alan informs me, "and he always pays for all his Strats!"

Interestingly, on close inspection it's noticeable that the 22nd fret overhangs on the treble side of the fingerboard, and you can see the tang under the fretwire as though it had not been trimmed when the guitar was fretted. It is, though, in my opinion the best of the three guitars. There are no major dings, although inevitably, some surface scratches are visible. The vibrato, like the others, looks set for a semitone pullback. The B-string saddle is set higher, as on the other two Strats. All of Pete's Stratocasters have the Clapton signature decal rubbed out because they are no longer Eric Clapton signature models in the true sense.

Black Strat

The black Strat that fans may have noticed at Hyde Park has 10.5-gauge strings fitted and is used for the song *Love, Reign O'er Me*. It is tuned half a step down. I don't see this guitar during my tour, but Alan says he always has around 16 Strats ready and waiting in the wings when The Who are on tour. A couple of them were custom-made for Pete, and the black model dates from 1992. >

Townshend's drool-worthy Fender backline

This is about as high as Townshend's volume ever goes!

Rickenbacker 1993 Plus Fireglo 12-string

Later in the day, at the back of the stage, Alan invites me to look at one of two Rickenbacker 12-string guitars that were sent to Townshend. The Fireglo finish is stunning to behold, and as I put my hand around the neck I note that it has a really slim profile, especially around the first-fret area. The model is called the 1993 Plus, and is an update of the model he used in the sixties that was exclusive to British distributor Rose Morris. The two-piece neck has been widened by 1/8th inch (3.1mm) and the fingerboard is made from Caribbean Rosewood. It has three vintage reissue 'Toaster' single-coil pickups, a stereo output and a trapeze tailpiece that catches all 12 strings; the close proximity of each pair of ball ends is thought to improve the tone.

Backline

As I walk over to the backline to have a look at Pete's amps, there's a playback of the band from the Dublin gig coming through the monitors and Pete's guitar sound is isolated on the track *Who Are You*. The tone of that guitar is beyond a simple explanation, but I want one nonetheless!

I am introduced to Tim Myer, who takes care of Pete's backline. Tim works with numerous other major acts, from Jeff Beck, Roger Waters and G.E. Smith to Snowy White. Looking straight at the rig, Pete's main amp is a Fender Vibro-King 60-watt combo in blonde with an Oxblood grille cloth. It has a trio of the earlier 10-inch Eminence blue frame Alnico speakers fitted, and sits on top of a Fender 2x12 cabinet. In the middle is a Vibrolux Reverb combo with 2x10 speakers, on top of another 2x12 cabinet. The Vibro-King is 22.5 inches in height, 24.75 inches wide and 10.5 inches deep, weighing 72lb. Next to that is another complete Vibro-King set-up, which is brought into use at the end of the show, usually on *Won't Get Fooled Again*, but the settings are lower than the main amp. Townshend's main amp has a piece of tape to indicate where the volume should be set, and I was amazed to see it around number 3! The treble is set at 7, the bass is just over 3, and the mid is at 4. "Usually, at some point in the show Pete will turn the volume up to about 3.5 on his main amp, but not much higher than that!" Tim tells me. The Vibrolux has the inputs covered with black tape on the normal channel, but a lead is coming out of the bright input channel.

> "Pete's main amp has a piece of tape to indicate where the volume should be set. I was amazed to see it around number 3!"

As well as the spare Vibro-King, there is a Pete Cornish splitter box that is marked 'Pete Cornish Custom Design, Isolated Piezo/mag splitter Pete Townshend S/N 0607 Oct 2006'. This is the box used to blend the Fishman Power Bridge piezo pickup and the Gold Lace Sensors. It's a stereo set-up with huge tonal capabilities, and Pete just dials in what he wants. At the back of the rig, there are two more Vibro-Kings and another spare 2x12 cabinet, that are switched on during a gig; and the amps have the settings the same for any sudden changes needed due to front-line failure. Everything is designed for minimal disruption, so switchover can be as efficient as a Formula 1 tyre change.

Myer also brings out the TubeTraps, bass traps made by Acoustic Sciences Corp, invented by Art Noxon. On the top is written, 'this half is a treble diffuser and usually faces the listener, the full perimeter is bass absorptive'. >

Nothing is left to chance when setting up Pete's rig

TubeTraps, made by Acoustic Sciences Corp

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ARTIST: JOE ROBINSON

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Pino Palladino

I meet Michael Kaye, who looks after Pino's backline. He's another top-pedigree individual: Michael's worked with Stephen Stills, Don Henley, Megadeth, Prince and many others. Palladino has a similar TubeTrap lay-out, but placed more at the sides of his speakers, separating him from Zak on drums and Roger centre-stage. These traps are positioned to eliminate excessive build-up of bass frequencies. Kaye shows me one of Pino's bass guitars; it's Pino's own Fender Custom Shop Signature P-Bass, based on an original 1962 Precision. I notice straightaway on the top edge of the headstock, a white piece of tape with the word 'pinky' written on it. The bass has a lightweight alder body that has a distressed finish, which is nitrocellulose. It has a C-shape quarter-sawn straight-grain maple neck. The rosewood fingerboard has the standard 34-inch scale length, with a 'board radius of 7.25 inches and a nut width of 1.75 inches (44.45mm). There are 20 frets, that are very well fitted with dot inlays and a vintage-style split single-coil Precision Bass pickup. It has a master volume and tone control, with a four-saddle American vintage bridge, and the aged nickel/chrome hardware, that has been oxidised, looks great. The scratchplate is the four-ply tortoiseshell type, and there are knurled flat-top control knobs. There

"Michael Kaye looks after Pino's backline – Michael's worked with Don Henley, Megadeth and Prince..."

is a vintage-style slotted truss rod nut and the aged plastic parts finish it off. The aged lacquer effect is extremely well done. Mike then shows me Palladino's guitar rack and pulls out his second bass. This model appears to have two old Gibson Thunderbird pickups fitted with stainless steel covers. He then takes me to another flightcase, and inside is a small softcase housing Analog Alien effects; there's a Rumble Seat drive/delay/reverb, which was recommended to both Palladino and Simon Townshend by Joe Walsh. In addition, there's an Alien Bass Station, a FuzzBubble-45 and an Alien Twister Analogue Fuzz. Effects on his main board are an Emma DiscomBOBulator, which is an enevelope filter/auto-wah, a Boss Octave pedal and another Alien Bass Station unit. There's also an amp channel switcher and a Snark tuner. Palladino uses Fender Super Bassman amps.

Pino's onstage bass pedalboard, which he runs into Fender Super Bassman amps

Michael Kaye putting Pino's bass set-up through its paces

Pino definitely has a liking for Analog Alien pedals...

The bass rack, with Pino's signature Fender Custom Shop bass at the rear

A pair of Fender Super Bassman heads are at the heart of Pino's rig

I contact Marcus Thompson from Acoustic Sciences, who very kindly directs me to Chris Klein, the company's studio acoustic specialist. Klein was directly involved with setting up the TubeTraps for Townshend. He tells me: "Pete has used them in his studio for years. When I was working with Zak Starkey, and involved in his stage set-up, Pete was interested to know how they would work with his own stage amp set-up.

"They make an amp punchier, and where Pete stands will reach about 92dB. The large 16-inch traps are 55Hz absorption, but if you turn the trap around, it will exceed 400Hz diffusive." Pete used four of them for the Hyde Park gig, and Tim used a plan layout showing the precise placement for this gig.

"I measure from the amp grille cloth to one of the traps and place them strategically to diffuse the volume hitting Pete. Small pieces of white gaffer tape are then placed on the floor around them in case they're moved accidentally. Pete likes to have as close to a studio sound as you can get, and these traps are very effective – even for an outdoor gig."

"Pino Palladino's traps are set up in a different way," Chris explains, "because of the frequencies he generates, in order to get rid of the peaks and valleys. This is done in order to produce the sound Pino wants to hear."

Success Story

We guitarists are constantly looking to get 'that' sound from our instruments, a signature tone that defines us as individuals. Whether you play flamenco, jazz, funk or rock, with four or six strings, if you look at a player such as Pete Townshend and try to understand what he achieves with his guitar, it becomes apparent that his finely-tuned stage setup is much more than simply a collection of his favourite gear – it provides a means of expression and a direct line between the artist and his audience.

Pete Townshend's live guitar playing is a force of nature. His control over the wall of sound he creates is phenomenal, as is his command of dynamics – whether he's playing a solo or arpeggiating in quick succession. And when he hits that A chord, he does it like nobody else can. Alan Rogan is a vital link in Townshend's chain, too; he's been Pete's tech for many years, and has a unique understanding of all that is required to keep his guitars in top shape, which in turn helps The Who remain one of the biggest live bands on the planet after more than five decades in the business.

Steve Clarke and *Guitar & Bass* would like to thank Alan Rogan, Chris Klein, Binky, Tim Myer and Michael Kaye for their time and help with this feature.

Simon Townshend

Moving on, I then meet 'Binky'; he deals with all the onstage technical duties for Roger Daltrey and Simon Townshend. Another guy with experience of working with the big guns, he's worked with Stone The Crows, Les Harvey, Bryan Adams, Emperor Rosko and Talking Heads. Binky is working on Simon's Gibson J-200, and I notice the bone bridge saddle is particularly large and very highly polished. I also note that the strings do not sit in grooves on the bridge saddle. There seems to be a misconception that the bridge saddle should be cut with slots to accommodate the strings, but the slots should not be too deep, as this takes away the tone of the guitar, and also causes tuning problems because of the break angle going to the bridge pins.

The serial number dates the guitar to July 1997. It is likely that, along with two other J-200s, this guitar is used in rotation on The Who's Quadrophenia tour, which ran from June 1996 to August 1997. In July 1997, Gibson artist rep Tim Bolin presented Pete Townshend with a Fishman Matrix-equipped J-200 acoustic, and I wonder if this could be the one. I also take a look at Simon's 1964 Gibson SG Junior – it is in great condition. I note that the machineheads have been replaced, and there's a screw missing on the treble side. These are such great guitars, with lots of midrange for such a simple design. Simon is a brilliant guitarist, and provides a solid foundation with The Who's rhythm section. Simon's rig consists of a Hiwatt Custom 100, one 4x12 cab, two 2x12 cabs and a Fishman acoustic combo. He has an impressive effects arsenal, including a TC Electronic G-System, Blackstar HT-Delay, MXR Micro Amp (x2), TC PolyTune, Compulator by Demeter Amplification, Fulltone Fulldrive, MXR Carbon Copy analogue delay, Boss TU-12H Tuner, two volume pedals and a wah.

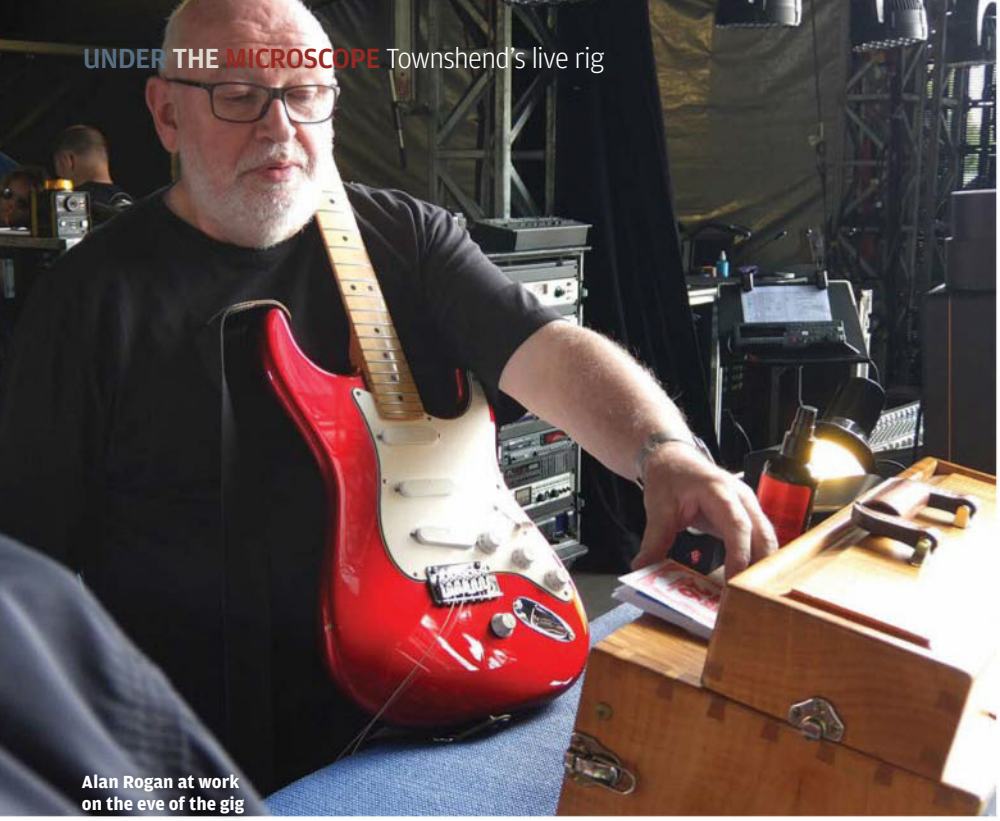
The 1964 Gibson SG Junior that Simon uses

Simon's TC Electronic G-System

Simon's pedalboard also includes a Fulltone Fulldrive, Demeter Compulator and two MXR Micro Amps

A Hiwatt Custom 100 and three cabs make up Simon's backline of choice

One of three Gibson J-200s used on The Who's Quadrophenia tour from 1996-97



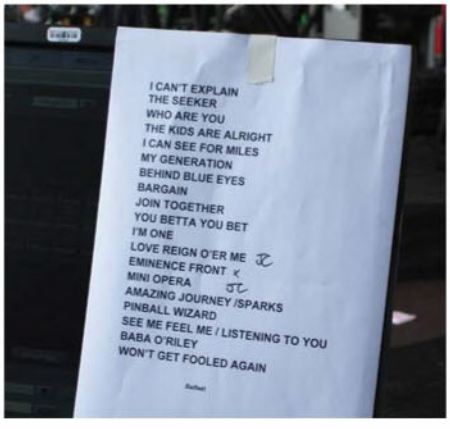
Alan Rogan at work on the eve of the gig

Even the flightcases are cool...

The view from the stage at Hyde Park

The channels labelled up and ready to mix...

Pete's Pete Cornish piezo/magnetic splitter box



Townshend's 1993 Plus Rickenbacker 12-string is based on the models he smashed so many of in the 60s

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READER BOARDS

Sonic adventurer **BEN TANSEY** has stocked his pedalboard with multiple flavours of fuzz, although he still pines for 'the one that got away'. Here, he talks us through his set-up...

KIT LIST

Ben Tansey

- **PEDALS (IN ORDER)** Mission Engineering VM-Pro, BMF Effects Sisyphuzz, Z.Vex Fuzz Factory, Death By Audio Fuzz War, Catalinbread Belle Epoch, Crowther Audio Hotcake, BMF Effects El Jefe, TC Electronic PolyTune, Keeley Electronics Phase 24, Earthquaker Devices Hummingbird, Malekko 616 Ekko, Electro-Harmonix Holy Grail Max
- **PATCH CABLES** D'Addario Planet Waves solderless pedalboard cable kit
- **POWER SUPPLY** Voodoo Lab Pedal Power Mondo
- **BOARD TYPE** Pedaltrain PT-2

HEAR IT HERE...

Soundcloud.com/benjamintansey

What inspired this set-up?

A need for simplicity and a love of boisterous fuzz pedals! I'm inspired by experimental noise-makers such as Thurston Moore and Nels Cline, Anna Calvi and her gorgeous playing, and good axe thrashers such as Fugazi and Duane Denison of The Jesus Lizard. For the most part, those guys let the guitar do the work, not the pedals (although Cline is a notorious pedal fiend), so I've tried to create a board that gives me a few drive options, several flavours of fuzz and then some delay and phase for depth and colour.

Tell us a little about the journey...

My pedalboard has been evolving for about three years now. I had a much bigger board than this some time ago, with about 14 pedals on it, but it became rather stressful to use and unwieldy, so I decided to slim it down. I think I've reached a point now where I've got sounds and tones that I actually use, ones that enhance my playing and allow me to be creative, but that don't overwhelm me. Before that, with the bigger board, I felt like I had too much choice and I didn't know where to start. All my favourite players achieve weird and interesting things with the instrument itself – and any pedals they use supplement that, they're not a starting point; so I try to follow that example.

Is there anything else you're looking to add?

Despite loving J Mascis and Jimi Hendrix, I've always been quite anti-wah, but since forming a funk band I've been listening to Funkadelic and Sly And The Family Stone, thinking maybe I should get one. We'll see, I might try to squeeze the new Cry Baby Mini on the board somewhere! Plus I'm always keeping an ear out for a new fuzz!

What guitars and amps do you use?

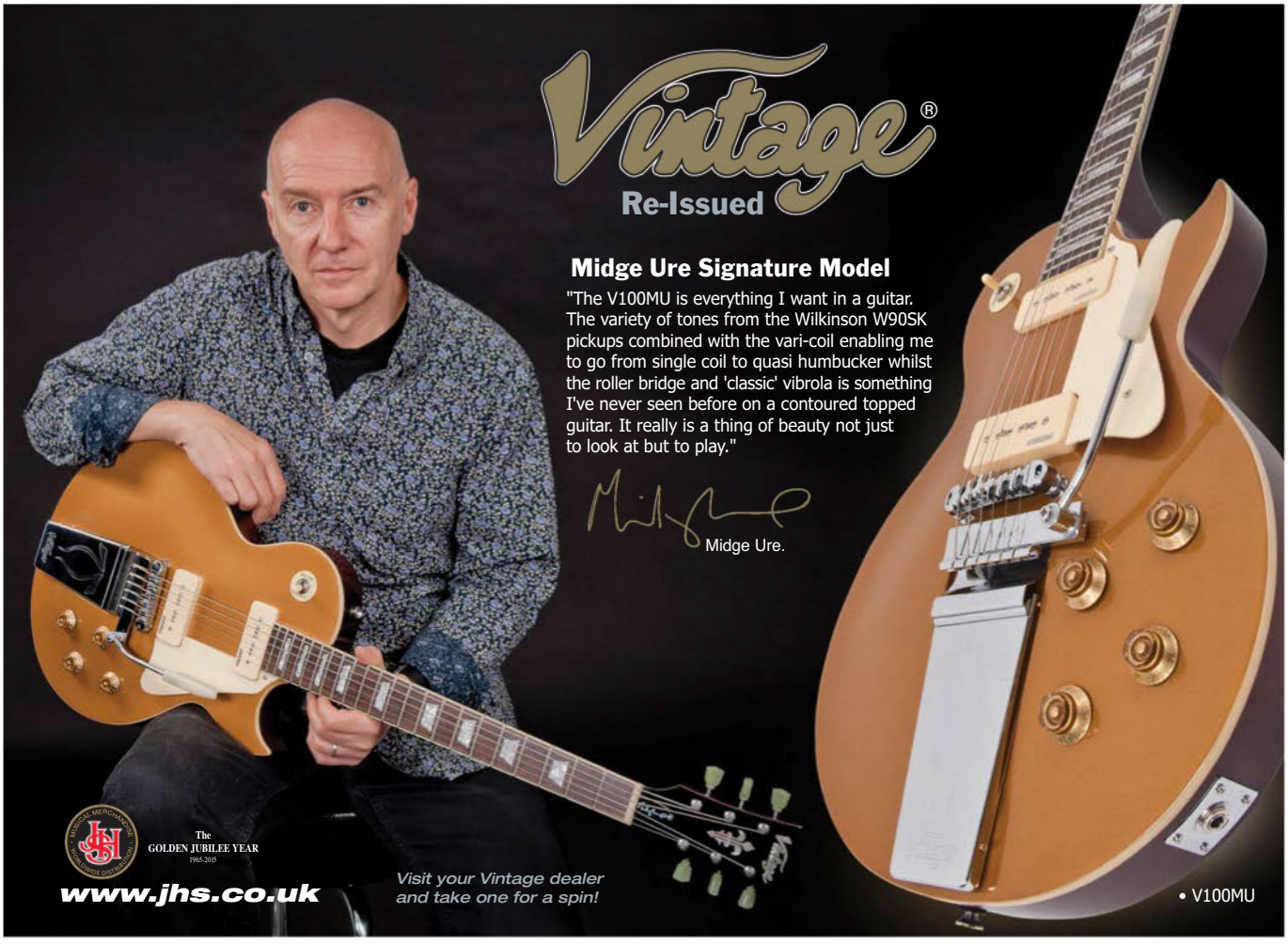
I alternate between a vintage reissue Fender Jazzmaster and an American Deluxe Telecaster. Amps-wise, I use a Fender Princeton for practice at home, recording and for smaller venues – and my beautiful hand-wired Vox AC30 when I can get away with it and can be bothered to carry the thing.

What lessons have you learnt along the way?

I've learnt so much! I've learnt it's important to try as many pedals as possible before buying so you know what's available and what you like. I've learnt less can indeed be more and I've learnt that just because a pedal sounds great on a YouTube demo – or even in the shop, if you're lucky enough to have a local store that stocks interesting stuff – that doesn't mean it will play nicely with the rest of your board. Think about the practicalities (size, buffers, etc) and how pedals will interact with one another. Oh, and you need to be REALLY certain before you sell a pedal... I still regret parting with that Devi Ever Shoe Gazer.

Guitar & Bass SHOW US YOUR BOARD

To be in with a chance of seeing your pedalboard in the mag, either post a picture on our Facebook page via this link **http://bit.ly/showusyourpedalboard** or email **guitarandbass@anthem-publishing.com**



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SOUNDTRACK OF MY LIFE

Hotei

Hotei has sold 40 million albums in Japan. Here, he selects the most influential records in his collection

Japanese songwriter and virtuoso guitarist Hotei, formerly of Japanese rock act Boøwy, became known all over the globe for his song *Battle Without Honor Or Humanity*, featured in Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill*. His new album, *Strangers*, is his first to be released internationally – with guest appearances from the likes of Iggy Pop, Rammstein and Emigrate's Richard Z. Kruspe, Bullet For My Valentine's Matt Tuck, Noko of Apollo 440 and Texan singer Shea Seger. Over the years, Hotei has worked with artists including David Bowie, Roxy Music's Andy Mackay, INXS, Blondie and Joni Mitchell, and played with The Rolling Stones on their 50th anniversary tour. *Guitar & Bass* caught up with this incredible experimental player, now living in London, to find out what's in his record collection...

Oingo Boingo
ONLY A LAD

"He's now known for his music in the film world, but this is Danny Elfman's band. The intense, irregular arrangements are really fun. With brass and guitar ensembles and other instrumental combinations, I learned so much from this band. When I was a teenager in the 70s, I was influenced a lot by new wave and the bands that followed."

David Bowie
STATION TO STATION

"David Bowie is definitely the artist who has influenced me most. I love all his work, but hearing the funky guitar of Carlos Alomar and Earl Slick on this album is what inspired me and made me want to be a guitarist who can dance while playing! Sharing the stage with David Bowie in 1996 to play *All The Young Dudes* is a moment I will never forget."

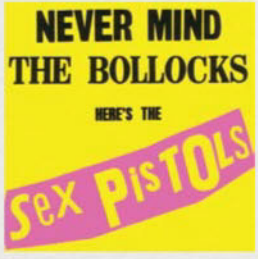
Bill Nelson's Red Noise
SOUND ON SOUND

"There are an endless number of guitar heroes, like Jimi Hendrix, Jimmy Page, Clapton, Van Halen and others, but Bill Nelson is probably the guitarist who has had the greatest influence on me. The sharp guitar riffs and the rhythm of this album are tied up in the breakneck speed of a roller coaster. It's so amazing that you forget to breathe!"

Thw Brian Setzer Orchestra
THE DIRTY BOOGIE

"I've played with Brian several times, and I've never known a guitarist with more technique. Not only rockabilly and country, he has also studied jazz and classical theory. I remember meeting with Jeff Beck and Brian in Tokyo once, just the three of us, and Jeff drilling Brian with guitar questions. It was a moment that guitar kids would dream of."

Sex Pistols
NEVER MIND THE BOLLOCKS



"Early on with my practice, I was getting frustrated thinking I'd never be able to shred like Van Halen or Steve Vai, with their speed and technique. And then along came the Sex Pistols. Screw the technique! Just play with passion and feeling! The surging and heavy sound of the Pistols really opened me up. A name in rock history that will never be forgotten."

Roxy Music
SIREN

"Stylish and avant-garde, if it hadn't been for Roxy Music, I would never have played rock 'n' roll with a suit and tie. I performed with them in 2010, and Andy MacKay also joined me on stage as a guest at my Shepherd's Bush Empire gig in 2013. I might be the only musician in the world so lucky as to have played with both Bowie and Roxy?!"

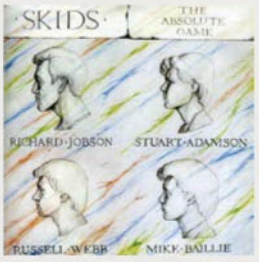
Average White Band
CUT THE CAKE

"When I first started playing, my friends were trying to copy *Smoke On The Water*, but I liked funky cutting guitar, like AWB and EW&F. For me, the pleasure in playing the guitar comes more from an implicitly cool and sharp rhythm, rather than a long euphoric solo. I went to Ronnie Scott's the other day to see Hamish Stuart... he is an eternal guitar hero of mine."

Sparks
PROPAGANDA

"With a unique and operatic way of singing, this music expands quickly and theatrically. Along with early 10cc, this is one of my favourite avant-garde pop albums. Although *Kimono My House* is what they're widely known for, I really like the way this album deploys itself like a roller coaster. I also really enjoyed the album cover's conceptual artwork."

Skids
THE ABSOLUTE GAME



"I was strongly influenced by the punk and new-wave movement. Television, Gang Of Four, Bauhaus, Killing Joke were great, but it was this Skids album that I listened to over and over again. I especially liked the guitar on *Out Of Town*. The melodic and humming solo that I really love came from Skids, and from Big Country's influence."

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THE Guitar & Bass INTERVIEW

"I don't want it to look or sound perfect. It has to be really free. I like that element of discovery"

If you've switched on your radio lately, you've heard Gabrielle Aplin. The English singer-songwriter with the world at her feet tells all about her collaborative new album and the "old guitars with stories" that she used to record it...

Story **Chris Vinnicombe** | Photography **Eleanor Jane**

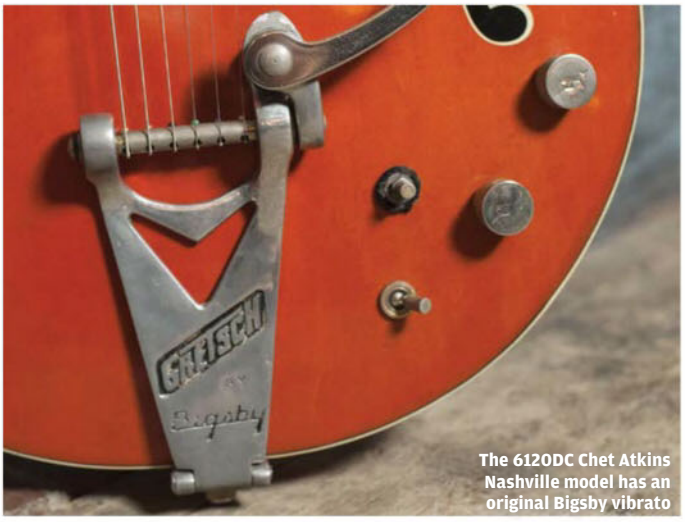
"I've been doing lots of sleeping today," admits Gabrielle Aplin at the outset of our conversation. Yet though it's been more than two years since her debut album, *English Rain*, went straight in at number two in the UK album chart, the 22-year-old certainly hasn't spent the intervening months resting on her laurels. 18 September sees Aplin release her second studio long-player *Light Up The Dark*, a confident follow-up that looks set to make the Wiltshire native, who has already amassed 1.5 million singles sales and tens of millions of Spotify and YouTube plays, an even bigger star.

Though Aplin's wonderful vocals remain front and centre, *Light Up The Dark* feels more ambitious and experimental than *English Rain*, with a more fully-realised sound than a typical solo singer-songwriter record. We discover that collaboration was key, with guitarist Luke Potashnick of The Temperance Movement providing a space for the album to take shape.

"I started writing it in January last year; we ended up writing and recording the whole album in his house," Aplin explains. "It just really naturally fell out... it was weird. I think I'm at my most comfortable writing on my own, but what was great about writing with Luke was that it was very relaxed, it was a place where you could go and experiment. It was really cool to just have one collaborator throughout the whole process. And it was cool to be able to record in a home studio and not have the pressure of a big, fancy London studio. It just felt really free.

"Mostly it would either be me bringing in an unfinished song, either getting him to kind of chime in at the end and help produce it or help with the sounds, or it was the other way around and Luke would come in with a guitar part or riff and we would collaborate >

Aplin picked this Gretsch up in Norman's Rare Guitars in LA



The 6120DC Chet Atkins Nashville model has an original Bigsby vibrato

that way. It was really nice to be able to do that."

Though she's also a skilled pianist, Aplin tends to write mainly on the guitar, and working with Potashnick over the last two years or so has inspired her to experiment more with electric instruments: "I felt like I was stuck writing with my acoustic guitar a little bit," she recalls. "I never really got into electric guitars until about two and a half years ago. I went to LA, there's an amazing shop called Norman's Rare Guitars – he has loads of vintage guitars and stuff. I just went in and saw this amazing Gretsch, and I was like, 'Alright, I'm done!'.

"I'm really into old guitars with stories; on my album, Luke had this amazing black and white 60s Silvertone, and it's really a rickety old, kind of shit guitar! But it sounds amazing. It's so crunchy, it's amazing. And he sold it to me after we'd finished recording with it, so that's really cool. Some of them can be really bad, but that one just happens to be incredible. It's really chunky, but I've been using it in place of an acoustic guitar on some of my songs when I play live as well. It sounds amazing through an amp, or just kind of straight through with no pedals on. It's one of those guitars you don't kind of need to use pedals with.

"I've got a Tele as well and I find that needs some sort of crunchy pedal on it to make it less twangy. The Silvertone is so crunchy, I love it, it kind of sounds horrible but in a good way! They are definitely coming back into fashion.

"In a small charity shop, I found like a tiny little Casio Tone Bank keyboard from the nineties, it just has two octaves, with drum loops on it. We ended up recording lots of that as well and writing with those loops; I just love finding old, bad instruments!"

> "I'm really into old guitars with stories; on my album, Luke had this amazing black and white 60s Silvertone. It sounds amazing"

We wonder if writing with loops contributed to the more band-like feel of many of the songs on the album, providing rhythmic inspiration that one might not get when writing solo with an acoustic guitar. "If I was to sit down with a guitar, without anything... I don't know where I'm going to start, it could go anywhere," Aplin acknowledges. "But as soon as you put some sort of loop on, I have an idea straight away of what kind of feel I want. Whether it's a rhythm for a riff, or a chord-y thing, or some kind of weird part with a loop pedal or a delay pedal... I'll have that vibe and that feeling when I have a loop, definitely. But the kind of band aspect [to the sound of the album] comes from Luke bringing in the rest of The Temperance Movement, who all recorded in different rooms of the house. I didn't want it to be the sort of classic singer-songwriter album, I wanted it to have something about it. Rather than just go with the classic drum set-up in the corner of the room, I really wanted to do some weird percussive things, too; we definitely experimented. We never set up the drums in a normal way!"

GOOD ACOUSTICS

Aplin's favourite acoustic guitar is a mahogany 1944 Martin 00-17, an instrument that many people would be reluctant to take out on the road: "I've got a few vintage guitars, and I've always been scared to tour them in case they get broken," she says. "Then they've ended up just sitting there in the house for a year while I wasn't here, because I was touring and I wasn't playing them. I've started to consider them as something I consume and I take very good care of – and I just hope they don't get broken.

"And, obviously, I enjoy playing them. I had an LR Baggs pickup fitted on the Martin; my plan was to play it live through an amp as well, and use some pedals on that and get some really interesting sounds going; but I think the pickup in the guitar sounds amazing when it's DI'd, so for ease we did that, but I'd definitely like to use it through an amp. I think when a guitar is really old and worn-in and looked after, they just sound amazing; they sound better the older they get."

Under the influence

When it came to experimentation, Aplin's influences were varied: "We were listening to lots of Edward Sharpe & The Magnetic

Zeros for percussion and sounds and quirkiness. And things that Chilly Gonzales has produced, he's amazing; he did *The Reminder* by Feist, and we definitely listened to his guitar sounds and his vocal sounds. He recorded Feist's vocal through an amp and mic'd it up and put distortion on it, things like that. So we definitely experimented there.

"I was really loving Beck's *Morning Phase* album when I was making this album, mostly for the strings and the arrangements. The strings are incredible because they're not too flouncy and too orchestral, they are really creepy and kind of Nick Cave-esque. We were definitely inspired by that. Also, Arcade Fire's anthemic kind of sounds.

"I wasn't afraid to experiment with synths, either. I went into a big studio for a day and got to play on loads of vintage synths. It was really fun to do that and not be scared, and just experiment really freely. There were about 100 synths in there and a couple of mics. It was mental."

In search of imperfection

Out of the synth room and back in guitar land, it's clear that Aplin finds inspiration in the allure of musicians who have their own voice on the instrument, rather than those with flawless technique: "I really like seeing an artist who clearly hasn't been taught to play the guitar, playing the guitar. Or someone who has their own way.

"Even though he was mostly an acoustic player, I'm really inspired by Nick Drake. I >

Not many players would take a 1944 Martin out on the road

An LR Baggs soundhole pickup

A modern 000-15M is a back-up for the 1944 Martin

Aplin's live amp of choice is a Fender Blues Junior

love his way of playing. It's really imperfect, and just really unique to him. I also love the way Feist plays guitar, and Cat Power.

"I don't want it to look or sound like it's perfect. It has to be really free and a bit wobbly, as long as it can sit around everything else. I taught myself completely, and I've found my way of playing... I'm constantly trying to make sure I don't know everything! I like that element of not knowing everything perfectly, because in the writing you end up coming out with all these weird chord changes and weird things; I like having that element of discovery when you're playing, and having to guess where you are going, because you never know what's going to come out."

Sharing responsibilities

When it came to recording the guitar parts on *Light Up The Dark*, the division of labour was split fairly evenly between Aplin and Potashnick. As they took quite a live approach during the recording sessions, it often depended on whether Aplin was playing keyboards: "Luke did a lot of the kind of riffs and the weird noises," she explains.

"For example, on *Light Up The Dark* [the song], I did the piano, Luke played the guitar. On *Skeleton*, I did piano and the synthy stuff, and Luke played the guitar. *Hurt*, I played guitars on... I think we both played on everything to be honest. Most of the things I played piano on, Luke played the electric and then I would put my acoustic parts on afterwards.

"There's a song at the very end of the album, *Don't Break Your Heart On Me*. I wrote that on my vintage Martin and it was the tuning from *Pink Moon* by Nick Drake. I'd got the tab book and I really wanted to learn the tuning – how does he do this? And yeah I used that tuning. That song was completely me, without Luke on it, which was really nice. I love buying tab books! But I never read the tab, all I wanted it for was the tunings."

> "No artists nowadays really write about what's going on in the world. Hopefully, it will change and people will start writing about things that are happening"

The aforementioned tunings are another aspect of six-string experimentation that Aplin enjoys: "I've started playing a lot more in standard tuning," she reveals, "but I love a weird open tuning, you never know what you're going to get. You just put it into some weird chord and that's an open tuning.

"I don't know where any notes are, I don't know what patterns there are or anything. It's just kind of making it up as you go along, which is pretty cool. But it's really important: record an iPhone voice memo every time!"

As the conversation turns to songwriting, it becomes apparent that *Light Up The Dark* saw Aplin take a fresh approach to the words that she penned as well as the music: "It was quite free. I guess the difference between my first album and this album is that I was able to write it all in the same space and time," she says. "The real big change for me was being happy to write about other people's stories and other things, and draw inspiration from places and travel.

"On my first album, I assumed that because I'm a singer-songwriter I had to write about things that happened to me. When I realised that I didn't have to do that, it was really cool, and it opened loads of doors for me."

A song to change the world

Given that Aplin lists the likes of Joni Mitchell, Bob Dylan and Neil Young among her favourite songwriters, it's no surprise that storytelling has begun to enter into her own work, something that's arguably a lost art in the landscape of modern pop. We ask Aplin if she thinks that's true. "No artists nowadays really write about what's going on in the world," she agrees. "There's definitely a very clear palette for what's on the radio and TV nowadays. Hopefully, it will start to change and people will start writing about things that are happening now, again >

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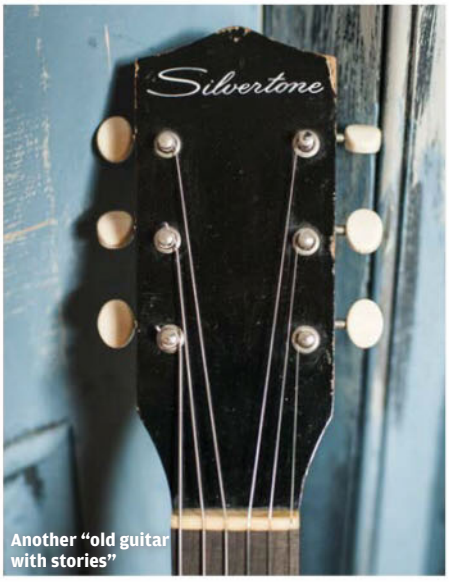
– that's why I really like Bob Dylan. I think people are scared to do it because of the backlash – you are going to be offending someone somewhere, you are going to be upsetting someone somewhere by speaking out about something. You wouldn't be speaking out unless it was a problem. Because of the internet and the media now, everything travels like fire, so maybe people are scared to do it and are warned not to. But it would only take a few people to do it and it wouldn't be frowned upon anymore. I'd love to be able to write a song that changes the world one day, but it's probably not going to happen!"

Perhaps Aplin will just have to settle for writing songs that have a huge impact on the fans who identify with them... "Absolutely," she agrees. "That's the great thing, knowing that someone's listening and likes your story because it relates to them in some way."

On the road again

The remainder of 2015 sees Gabrielle Aplin hit the road with her band in support of *Light Up The Dark*, something she's looking forward to after spending so much time in the studio. "The album comes out in September, so I'm doing a really small run of festivals and going out on kind of a small tour, then hopefully doing a bigger one in the new year," she reveals.

"Hopefully, I'm going to Japan in October and back to Australia, too. It'll be good to get back out of the UK for a while, I'm getting itchy feet!"



Another "old guitar with stories"

The Silvertone that "sounds horrible in a good way" appears on Aplin's new album

LISTEN UP

GABRIELLE APLIN
English Rain (2013)
Aplin's major label debut on Parlophone features her hit cover of Frankie Goes To Hollywood's *The Power Of Love* and the single *Panic Cord*.

GABRIELLE APLIN
Light Up The Dark (2015)
Released on 18 September, *Light Up The Dark* looks set to be another hit album and contains more ambitious arrangements and more of a band feel.

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Guitar & Bass INTRODUCES...

JARED JAMES NICHOLS

With his leonine locks, Jared James Nichols could be a mane attraction as he tours with Glenn Hughes this autumn. *G&B* chats to him about Les Pauls, Lynyrd Skynyrd and his new album

Story **Michael Heatley** | Photography **John Bull**

BLUES-ROCK is a difficult genre in which to stand out from the crowd these days – but the name of Jared James Nichols has already registered with some pretty important people. People such as Gary Rossington – who invited him to play on *Sweet Home Alabama* with Lynyrd Skynyrd when he opened for them in Germany, and Glenn Hughes – whom he'll be supporting on a tour of Europe from mid September through to November.

Wisconsin-born Nichols first picked up a guitar at the age of 14, practising for 12 hours a day as a teenager, and by the age of 21 he had played more than 500 gigs. He added a number of Musicians Institute honours to his CV, including winning the 2010 Jerry Horton competition and 2011's Les Paul Tribute and Outsanding Guitarist titles. He met his two-man rhythm section, both Swedes, on the day he arrived in Los Angeles and released his debut *Live At The Viper Room* EP in 2012. Nichols has also recorded with Hendrix studio engineer Eddie Kramer – another great learning experience for the 26-year-old – and has opened for ZZ Top.

Playing through a cranked-up Blackstar, with no pedals and no pick, Nichols makes a virtue of his rawness. It's a long way from the days when his mother used to drive him to jam sessions, but he's eager to make his mark in a highly competitive field. Nichols this year unleashsed a new album, recorded with Aerosmith engineer Warren Huart – *Old Glory And The Wild Revival*, which was initially released as an EP in 2013.

Q You were born in the same city as Les Paul...

"Yes, I grew up 20 minutes away from Waukesha. Believe it or not, my grandpa played drums in a polka band in the same town and knew Les Paul in the late 40s, early 50s. The funny thing, too, is where I was raised is literally one minute away from Alpine Valley, where Stevie [Ray Vaughan] played his last concert [in August 1990]. It's got a whole weird vibe over there, you know..."

Q We noticed the Stevie guitar strap...

"I was playing with a black Fender leather strap and, during long tours, it was 'Pull the guitar out, get crazy, put the guitar back in the case'. Things start smelling after about 70 shows. My friend said 'Take this one'; I started using it, and it's pretty cool. Maybe it's a little tribute!"

Q With guitars, is it Gibson all the way?

"It used to be Fenders all the way, but since I started doing the trio thing, the sound I'm trying to go for is a thicker, more throaty tone. That's why the past two years it's been all about P-90s. What I've been doing is getting dog-ears or soapbars from the 50s

Since growing up in the same city as the man himself, Les Pauls have held a special place in Jared's heart

Those going to dates on Jared's European tour with Glenn Hughes can expect an explosive show

and putting them in my guitars. There's something magical about that pickup. Yeah, it's loud and it buzzes, but when it's on it's on. In all the recordings I've been doing, I've been using the P-90, and I just love it. They're so individual-sounding."

Q What's your number one guitar?

"A 2010 Custom Shop LP single-pickup with a 1956 dog-ear from my Junior. It has the dog-ear and the harness, all off one guitar. I paid 500 bucks for it. It's got the huge 50s neck, volume and tone, and I play it – if you can believe – in D standard with 12-54s. That's because of the way it feels. I used to use 10s and standard, but when you tune down a whole step... I use 12s for added tension, not to try and say I play the heaviest strings in the world.

"I also have a mid-90s Les Paul Junior with a custom Seymour Duncan humbucker, which is based on a Pearly Gates. This one, too, has a big, thick neck. The difference on this guitar is it vibrates better because it has almost no finish. It's not pretty and it's not expensive, it's literally a piece of wood with a pickup and strings on it. This one, too, I run 12s on and D standard."

Q Who would you cite as a prime influence?

"My biggest hero is Leslie West. Listening to those old recordings, especially that golden-age Mountain stuff, that's where I want to go, especially live – the huge, huge guitar tone."

Q What's the difference between supporting a big band and playing your own shows?

"The venues. The last tour with Skynyrd, they were playing to 6-8,000 people a night, but in our club tour we were playing to 200 a night. But I feel I need to be playing as an opening act 'cos it's going to help me get a new audience. When we play the clubs, the cool thing is it's so intimate and so in-your-face that if they weren't a fan and didn't get it before the show they totally get it after. It's different every time."

Q Name just two tracks that are the essence of what you do

"Oh man! I would have to say – especially for the next tour, because we'll only have 45 minutes to give it all we got – *Haywire* and *Crazy*. They're a little bit in your face and, for me, it's all about energy, especially if you're playing live. If someone's going to see me play, expect a high-energy rocking show. I don't want to just shred guitar... it's more about showing people that great blues and blues-rock still exists, and not just from 30 years ago, but today."

Q Your album of originals ends with a blues classic...

"We were finishing the record and I was sitting there with a Dobro, and Warren (Huart, Aerosmith engineer), who helped on the record, said 'Hey, you should record that'. So we threw up a microphone... *Come On In My Kitchen* was one of the first traditional blues songs I ever heard, the Robert Johnson version, and it has always struck a chord with me. Although we're stretching out, trying to create our own sound, it all comes back to the blues."

AND ANOTHER THING... Jared has a 1960 Les Paul Special, all original, on loan from Joe Perry's son, Tony.

LISTEN UP

JARED JAMES NICHOLS

Old Glory And The Wild Revival (2015)

Began life as a five-song demo, then Jared hooked up with Eddie Kramer to cut more. The result, on French label Listenable, is explosive.

JARED JAMES NICHOLS

Live At The Viper Room (2012)

The collectable three-track live EP that started the buzz – but with two of the songs tacked onto the album, don't spend your life savings on it!

Bryson's Les Paul Junior has an adjustable bridge for better intonation, its pickup has been rewound and the knobs have been replaced

Press Association Images

As the Crow flies

With 20 years on the road and more than 20 million album sales under their belts, Counting Crows are a bona fide huge guitar band. *G&B* chats to their Les Paul Junior-toting guitarist David Bryson...

Story **Michael Heatley**

Imagine you're the guitarist in a just-signed act who are about to break big, as Counting Crows were in 1993 prior to the release of debut album *August And Everything After*. After a few years of success, you look around you and find not just one but two cuckoos in your nest... the band appears to have morphed into a folk-rock Lynyrd Skynyrd!

Fortunately, David Bryson has managed to carve out a vital role for himself as musical director – a Keith Richards to singer-songwriter Adam Duritz's Jagger. And the telepathy between the pair is much in evidence on the current world tour supporting latest release and US Number 6 hit *Somewhere Under Wonderland*.

"Adam's obviously the leader of the band," notes Bryson, "which is how it should be – the song is about the lyrics, the vocal melody. I don't care how great a guitar player you are, people are listening to the song. Even if you're Carlos Santana, people are listening to the song. Then the solo comes in and whatever...

"We have become practised in playing close attention to Adam. He likes to take the song someplace, and will sometimes fit entire other songs into a song. We'll be pedalling on a verse/chorus chord progression, and he'll be singing a completely different song as we do it. Sometimes, it's quite shocking – are you really doing this now? – and to me it's a part of the fun of being in this band."

Over land and sea

Trains, boats and planes play a large part in the life of any touring musician – and David has seen his share of all three since Counting Crows hit the road in the early 90s. But their recent decision to make touring more cost-effective has, to his delight, given him the chance to double the number of guitars at his disposal for live work.

"This April, we were in Australia," he explains, "so set of gear A went on a boat to Australia. In May, we were in Canada so, while we were in Australia, a truck drove set B from LA up to Vancouver. We flew home, had a week off, went to Canada, and our gear is sitting there. Meanwhile, the gear in Australia is on a boat to London, which is where we began our European tour. The B gear, which was in Canada, has been shipped back to LA and we will re-join it in Miami in July. By putting it on a boat rather than an aeroplane, one move from Australia to Europe paid for all the gear we had to buy."

> "The really weird guitar in my collection is a 1961 Jazzmaster which lacks its high E and B"

Bryson's main guitar set has evolved over the years. The sound on breakthrough hit *Mr. Jones* was a Gretsch, so a Tennessee Rose – "not a vintage, it's from the 90s" – takes care of the 'strummy' angle. "My main electric is a '56 Les Paul Junior, my rock guitar for a more aggressive sound," says Bryson. "Then I've got a Rickenbacker for the dozen songs throughout our career I play a 12-string on. I've got two Rickenbacker 12s now...

"The really weird guitar in my collection," he reveals, "is a 1961 Fender Jazzmaster, which lacks its high E and B – a four-string guitar. We centred the strings so they're not in their normal position and put super heavy strings on it. If you pick this guitar up, you would play it totally differently because it sounds different, it >

STUDIO WIZARDRY

David Bryson and Adam Duritz first got together in the guitarist's studio, a 16-track located in a San Francisco warehouse. "The demos we made got us signed – A&M Records liked them so much they wanted to put them out. But we wanted to redo it, so we hooked up with producer T Bone Burnett." The result was 1993's *August And Everything After*.

"In hindsight, having my studio and my [engineering and mixing] skills helped put our songs together in the way we wanted. If you don't have those skills, you're relying on someone else to do it, which can be good 'cos you're getting their flavour mixed in with yours. But we got as much time as we wanted to make sure it sounded how we wanted it."

In the studio with Counting Crows' singer-songwriter Adam Duritz

Getty Images

Bryson on acoustic duties with the Crows

Getty Images

feels different, it has no jangle to it. "It's on a song called *Come Around*, off *Saturday Nights & Sunday Mornings*, and *Speedway* on the *This Desert Life* album... When we were duplicating the set, we went out and found another Jazzmaster, but had to tweak it a bit to get it to feel the same as the other one.

"I've been fooling with what guitar replaces my Junior, 'cos it's really my favourite of the whole collection. If someone put a gun to my head and said, 'you only get to play one guitar all night long' it would be that one. It actually cleans up, and can be aggressive in a nice way, all by twiddling the volume knob. It's a really remarkable instrument."

> "I've been fooling with what replaces my Junior, 'cos it's my favourite of the whole collection"

The Junior is guarded faithfully by Bill Thomson, Byrson's guitar tech of some two decades, in whom our man has placed his complete faith to keep the irreplaceable 59-year-old instrument intact and safely in his possession when he's on the road.

When it comes to acoustics, Bryson has accrued a collection of four mid-60s Gibson B-25s. "I probably play acoustic on half the show, and I use a lot of capos," he explains. "A guitar-dealer friend of mine, Dave Hinton in St Louis, sent it me, and it quickly became my main acoustic," he says of the first of the Gibsons he added to his arsenal.

"It got to the point when we'd just play that one guitar and deal with the capos – so about a year ago, when we decided to replicate all the gear, I thought, 'why don't I just find some more of these things?'. So, now I have four. They're kind of under the radar. It's not like a Martin D-28, that everyone knows and wants, so they're not that expensive or hard to find."

Getty Images

Mandolin also features in Counting Crows' live set, played by Bryson or David Immerglück

THREE'S NO CROWD

So how exactly did one guitarist become three, David? "When we finished the first record... pretty much every song had more than one guitar, an acoustic track and an electric track, and I played 80 per cent of it. T Bone Burnett played some, and David Immerglück played some mandolin and slide guitar. When we went on tour, we asked David to join the band, and he declined – he was just starting out with John Hiatt. So we found Dan Vickrey, a friend of our keyboard player from San Francisco, and he felt like such a good fit that halfway through the tour we asked him to join.

"Later on, David decided he did want to be in the band, so we brought him aboard. He brings flavours Dan and I don't possess. Could we get by with just two of us? Absolutely, no problem. But we can do it, so we do – it broadens the palette."

If the capo fits...

While he rarely uses alternate tunings, David is "a big fan" of the capo. "With this band," he explains, "because the singer writes on piano, there's often [songs in] B flat or F. Those are weird keys for guitars, especially acoustics, if you want to get a nice open sound – so if it's in B flat I'll probably capo on the third fret, so I make a G chord and it's a big open sound."

When it comes to amplifiers, Vox AC30s and their Matchless clones have been Bryson's mainstay for his entire Counting Crows career – aside from a brief flirtation with a Marshall Bluesbreaker. But that's no longer the case, following a chance meeting with a less well-known Californian amp brand. "I recently found this Satellite, almost accidentally, and decided to try it out," recalls Bryson. "It's like my Junior to me; the amp has two knobs [volume and tone], that's it, but it's very versatile. It's very clear and clean, but when I step on some overdrive pedals, it dirties up nice.

"One of the challenges of touring is creating all the sounds. You don't play the >

Photo by Jordan Curtis Hughes

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A Gretsch Tennessee Rose is part of Bryson's live set-up

Anthony Moore

same guitar on all your records; your palette would be too small. But how do you get all those guitars sounding the way you want? Some people have amp-switching, but I've always wanted to have one amp that could make all my sounds happen – the Satellite is the best I've ever had."

> "I've wanted one amp that could make all my sounds happen – the Satellite's the best I've ever had"

The amp, hand built by boutique manufacturer Satellite, is a Barracuda with two KT66 valves, and is rated at 45 watts. "I put it through a 2x12 cab with a Celestion and one of those blue-back speakers they put in the AC30," explains Bryson. "The two speakers have a slightly different sound, and my soundman out front can go back and forth, depending on the venue.

"I've got an overdrive pedal and a couple of boost pedals I sometimes use to match guitars. Some will sound anaemic, so if you can use a little boost and bring up the gain, then it will match up better."

In a recording career that already amounts to over two decades, David believes proudly that he has retained his own individual sound. "I just do my thing. I don't know that people would say it's recognisable; maybe they would. I have many of the guitars I played on *August And Everything After*, and I guess I've stayed in the same genre, the same feel... My version of harmony and melody is me, you know?"

Set ideas

The Crows' live set is a fluid affair, keeping the musicians on their toes, although the current tour has 'bookends'. "We tend to open with *Round Here*; it's such a mood-setting piece and, of course, most people know it," says Bryson. "And we've been closing with the same song ever since we put it on a record. It's called *Holiday In Spain*, and Adam calls it our lullaby. It's our goodnight song."

Introducing new material into the set, Bryson admits, can be "a little challenging, because the percentage of people in the audience who have *August And Everything After* might be 100. Then you can go down the line and guess – probably 60 per cent of people have *Recovering The Satellites*. Then it probably starts to diminish. *Saturday Nights & Sunday Mornings*, maybe a quarter of the people have that...

"I think you can count on people being less familiar with the latest record. We start up *Rain King* [from *August And Everything After*] and the place goes absolutely batshit. We start *Earthquake Driver* from the new record; people like it, but many of them don't really know it. It's more of a tough sell."

Of the five or six selections from *Somewhere Under Wonderland* that are currently finding a place in the band's live sets, David highlights "a song called *Possibility Days*, I just think the lyric and arrangement are as good as we do. And *Palisades Park* is very unusual; if you can sit down, space out and really listen to the words, I think it's amazing what he's done with that..."

Counting Crows played only two gigs in 1995 in order to give Adam Duritz time and space to write a new album, but that's been the exception rather than the rule over the years. The band now boast several proud fathers – Bryson included – which makes touring problematic. Yet ask him how long he intends continuing, and Bryson's answer is: "Hopefully a long time".

"One thing that's been a fairly steady progression is that we work less than we used to," he continues. "This year, we're working a lot, but the first two records we probably toured for 18 months. You take six months to make a record and 18 months to tour it, so that's two years of being gone from home most of the time.

"For this album, the tour's about seven months. It's a lot less, it's still a long time to be away, but it's manageable. So let's keep doing it!"

LISTEN UP

COUNTING CROWS
August And Everything After (1993)
"The first record opened every door. We were able to jump very quickly into headlining." Now seven-times platinum.

COUNTING CROWS
Recovering The Satellites (1996)
Featured the legendary '56 Les Paul Junior... and, perhaps by no coincidence, was the band's first and only US Number 1.

COUNTING CROWS
Somewhere Under Wonderland (2014)
The Crows' seventh studio album which, for David, contains "some of the best writing Adam has done since *August*."

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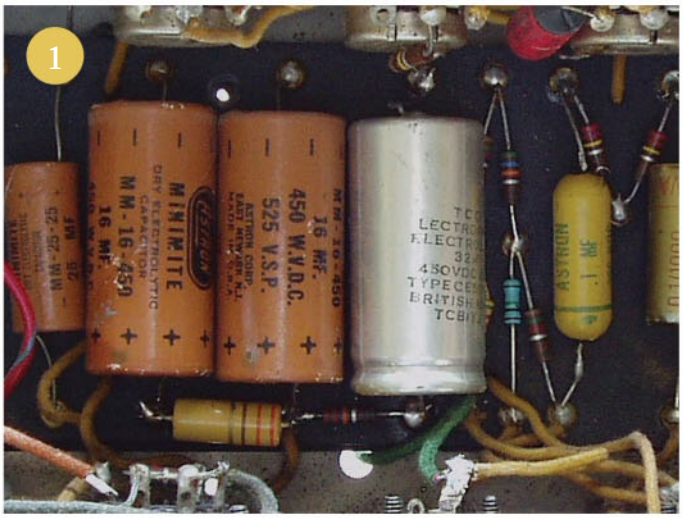
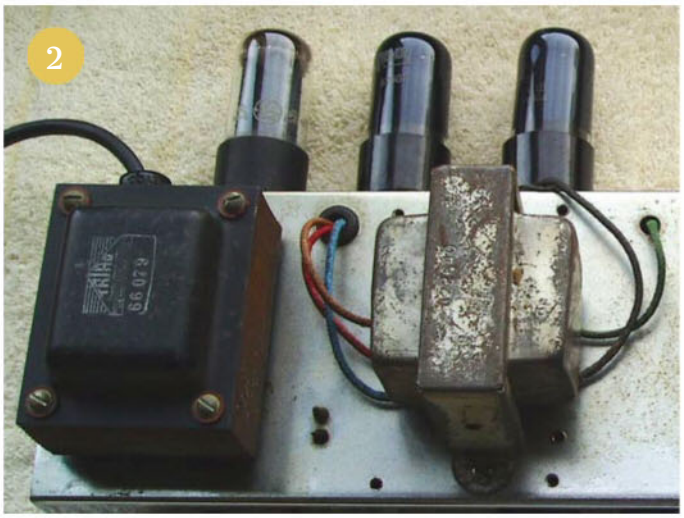
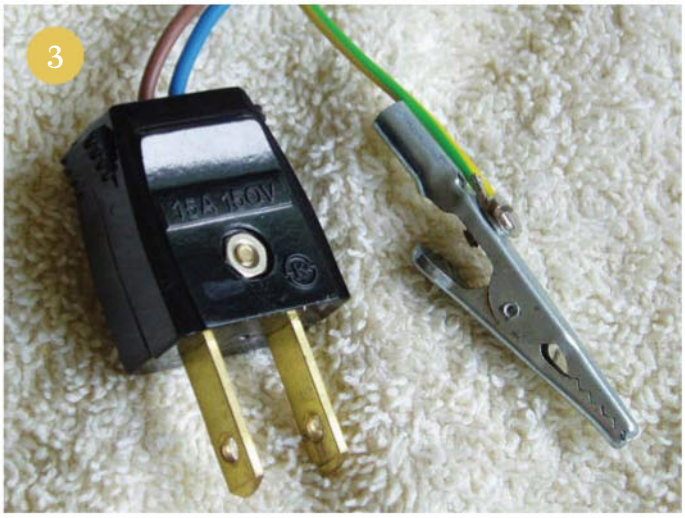
DIY WORKSHOP

'57 VIBROLUX PROJECT

HUW PRICE restores a tweed classic to its former glory and sends it back out onto the gigging circuit







1 **Several components had been changed, but surprisingly all but one of the electrolytic capacitors were still present.**

2 **The Vibrolux had its original mains transformer, but the output transformer had been changed to a Princeton/Deluxe spec 125A1A. We decided to keep it, because Fender also used this transformer in the 50s Vibrolux towards the end of the decade.**

3 **The amp had benefitted from a grounded mains upgrade, but the mains plug and grounding method didn't inspire much confidence.**

4 **The Vibrolux has to be used with a 110V step down mains transformer with a US socket. You can get three-prong US plugs from RS Components.**

Vintage bargains are still out there if you're prepared to take the time to look around, and you aren't too hung up on originality. Despite a re-tweed and a swapped speaker, Ed Oleszko couldn't resist this '57 Fender 5E11 Vibrolux when he found it languishing at the back of a guitar shop. What followed was an adventure in amplifier archaeology.

First look

Some sources suggest that the Vibrolux is essentially a 5E3 Deluxe with added tremolo. However, the Vibrolux circuit is much closer to a tremolo'd tweed Harvard. Although the Vibrolux cabinet has the same finger-jointed construction and dimensions as a Deluxe, the stock speaker is a 10-inch rather than a 12-inch.

At this point, I hadn't even seen the cabinet, but by all reports it had been subjected to a dodgy re-tweed at some point, and attempts to 'age' it resulted in a look that was more milk chocolate than elegant amber. Fortunately, though, the original nameplate and handle were still present, so Ed sent the cabinet to Mark Phillips at AF Custom Cabinets in South Wales for a more sympathetic restoration.

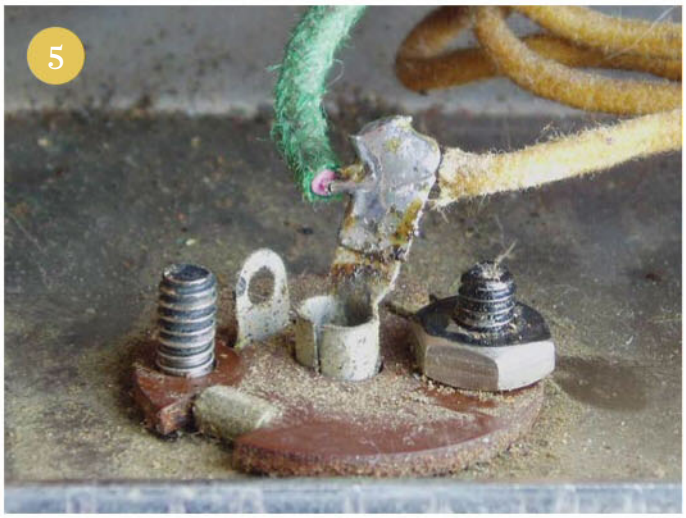
While this was being done, Ed wanted the Vibrolux restored electronically, too. He has every intention of gigging this amp, so the priorities were safety and reliability. He recognised that much of the amp's originality had already been lost, and so was open to circuit tweaks and modifications if they resulted in improved tone. The first task was to take a closer look in order to figure out what Ed had actually bought.

Digging deeper

The amp was working and the tone wasn't bad, but it felt a bit lifeless and underpowered. To my ears, the overdrive was a bit ragged, and compared with most tweed-style amps with dual-6V6 output stages, the Vibrolux had a lot more clean headroom. The tremolo effect was weak and the speed range seemed to be restricted.

This Vibrolux had undergone running repairs over the years. Several capacitors and resistors had been changed, but almost all of the electrolytic capacitors were still in situ 1. The replaced caps included a mixture of British and US components, some of which were vintage themselves. According to the schematic, a couple of these capacitors were not of the correct value, and the replaced resistors were a mixture of carbon and metal film types, rather than 50s-style carbon comps.

The serial number and date code on the original mains transformer and potentiometers indicated a manufacturing date of 1957. A '57 Vibrolux would have been fitted with a Triad #108



output transformer, but this amp's transformer product code read 125A1A – making it identical to the Schumacher-manufactured unit Fender installed in 60s Princetons, Deluxes and Deluxe Reverbs 2.

Its date code corresponded with 1963 and 1973, but the cloth-covered wires suggested the latter. Ed and I discussed sourcing a Triad #108 replacement, but further research revealed Fender began installing Schumacher 125A1A output transformers in the Vibrolux from mid-59 onwards, so we decided to keep it.

Safety first

Before going any further, I had to ensure the amp was as safe as possible. I was pleased that a grounded mains cable had already been installed, but at the other end of the cable I found a cheap two-prong US mains plug with the earth wire attached to a crocodile clip 3. A replacement three-prong US mains plug was sourced from RS Components, and we were good to go 4.

Making connections

The original speaker and tremolo footswitch connectors were RCA/phono 5. Although they do a job, the connections can be intermittent if you have to use quarter-inch jack plugs with jack-to-RCA adaptors stuck on the end. I decided to install open-frame metal jack sockets instead, and discovered the existing RCA socket holes were large enough to accommodate them 6.

Electrolytic capacitors

Amp restorers often have to balance originality with safety and reliability. If a vintage amp is pristine and bone stock, it's understandable if a collector wants to keep it that way. But when amps have already lost many of their original parts, sympathetic restoration allows owners to enjoy playing them without the worry of failure, or indeed death.

With ancient electronic components, the terms 'working' or 'not working' don't always apply. Components such as resistors often drift significantly from their specified value, and capacitors may go leaky long before they fail. Consequently, the amp may be functioning, but not as it was designed to.

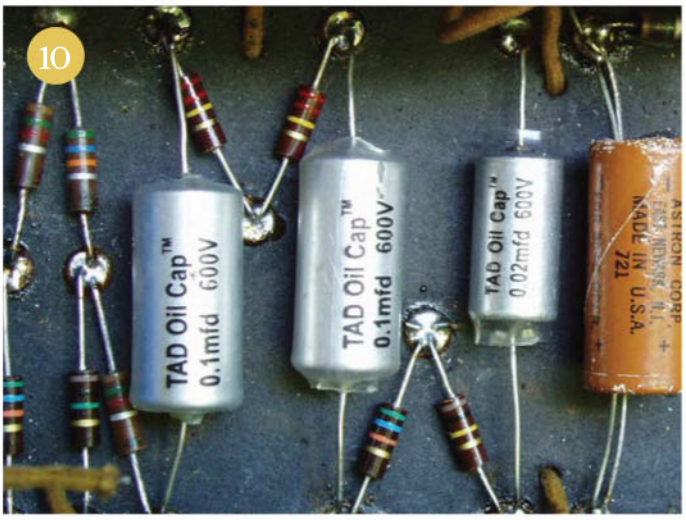
After disconnecting the amp from the mains supply and ensuring all the capacitors were drained of charge, I de-soldered one end of each electrolytic capacitor and tested them 7. Step one was a visual inspection to check there was no swelling or discharge from either end of the cap. Step two was using a professional capacitor tester 8. A 20uF had taken the place of one of the 16uF power supply filter caps, and it was leaky. I decided to change it, along with both 25uF cathode bypass caps and the 25uF >

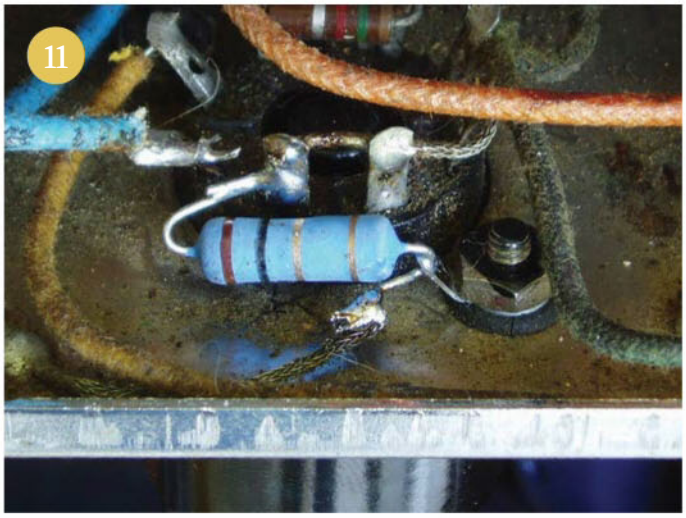
5 RCA sockets such as this were the original connectors for the tremolo footswitch and speaker. This is the speaker connection with the green wire coming from the output transformer and the yellow wire carrying the negative feedback signal.

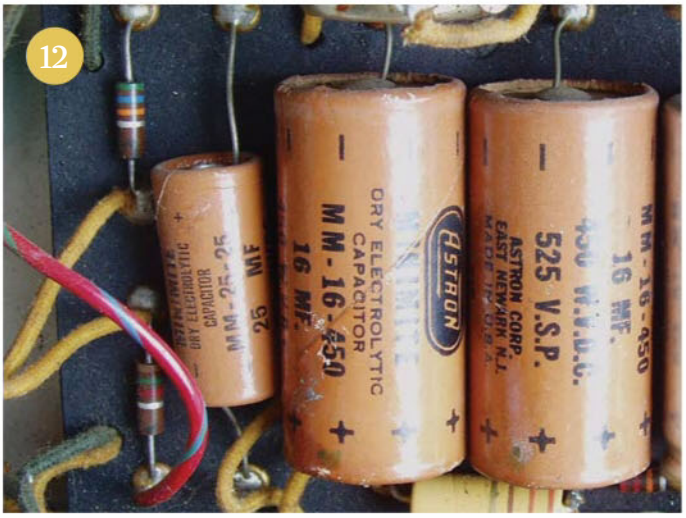
6 The open frame jack socket slotted through the existing hole. This is the connector for the tremolo footswitch. The name of the person who assembled this amp – 'Lily' – is written on a strip of tape.

7 This is a resistor soldered to two cables with crocodile clips on each end. Heat shrink insulation covers the solder joints. This potential life saver is easy to make, and used to drain charge from capacitors.

8 This professional capacitor tester can safely discharge capacitors then measure the value and tell you whether the cap is leaky.







9 The silver capacitor is a 25uF Astron, that was installed inside the orange cardboard tube. Underneath is a modern Sprague equivalent that will go inside the Astron cover to maintain the original look.

10 The original Astron capacitors were paper/oil types, and we wanted to replace them with something similar. These silver Tube Amp Doctor oil caps were made in much the same way.

11 The cathodes of both 6V6 output valves were connected to the chassis. Solder tags were fixed onto the valve socket bolts and 1-Ohm resistors were soldered from the cathode pins to ground via the solder tags.

12 The resistor at the top-left is the original 56K bias resistor. The one below is a 1K5 tied to a diode that's connected between the two.

bias cap. The two other 16uF power supply caps tested fine, so I left them alone.

Orange cardboard tubes enclosed the original Astron 25uF caps, so I opened up one end, slid out the capacitor and then put the Sprague Atom replacements back inside. Although the caps were being changed, it was good fun to preserve the original look 9.

Signal capacitors

When you're swapping capacitors, it's important to ensure that the voltage rating of the replacement is equal to or greater than the value of the original.

You can choose any number of products, including some amazing-looking Astron replicas from Luxe, but I decided to go with Tube Amp Doctor paper/oils, because they were reasonably priced, similar in construction to the ones I was removing and had garnered some favourable reviews from people who've used them 10. The primary purpose of a signal capacitor is to block DC while allowing AC to pass. DC comes from the power supply, and the only AC flowing through the amp should be the audio signal. When signal caps go leaky they can adversely affect tone, increase noise levels and potentially damage the amp.

We decided to replace all the signal caps in this amp for the sake of reliability, but the originals have been kept and could be reinstalled at a later date.

Resistors

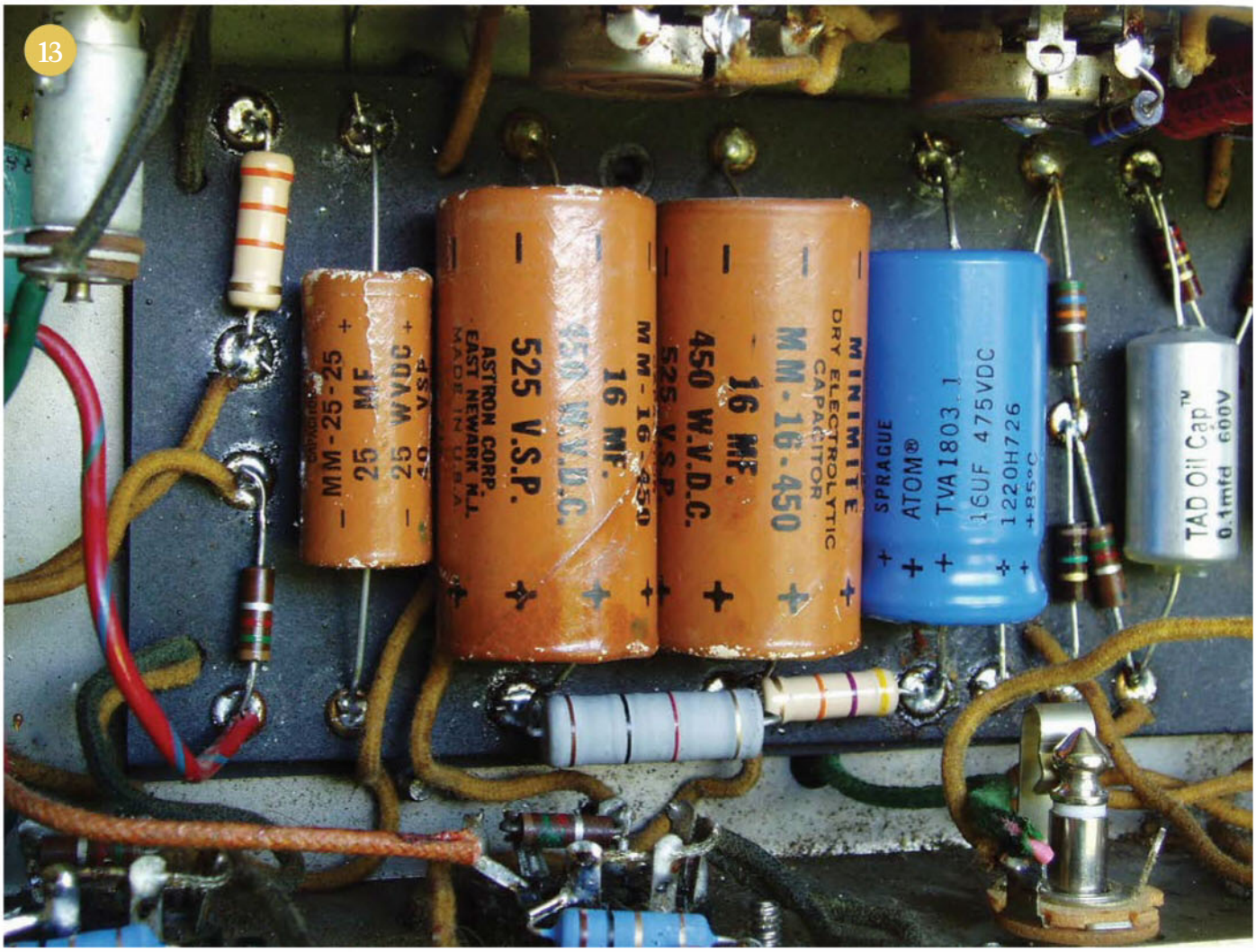
The decision to reinstall carbon comp resistors where they had been removed was driven as much by cosmetics as sonics, but Ed likes the sound of amps with carbon comps. Since this was a complete rebuild, I also tested all the original resistors that had survived from the 1950s – and replaced those that had drifted in value significantly.

Bias check

Unlike the 5E3 Deluxe, the tweed Vibrolux is a fixed-bias amp with both 6V6 cathodes directly connected to the chassis. There is a simple way for amateur amp tweakers to measure the bias and check how well the valves are matched; it involves connecting 1-Ohm resistors between the cathodes and ground 11.

A tiny 1-Ohm resistor makes no difference to the way the amp functions, but it means you can measure the voltage across the 1-Ohm resistor and apply Ohm's law to figure out the bias current. The 6V6s in this Vibrolux measured within 0.5mA of each other, so they were very closely matched, but the amp was biased fairly cold.

Apparently, this is a common issue, and some owners choose to install a bias adjustment potentiometer to replace the 56K bias resistor 12. Rather



than make a hole in the chassis, I experimented with resistor values until I achieved what I considered to be the best tone; then I checked that the bias was within recommended margins for a pair of 6V6 valves running in Class AB at the measured plate voltage. I ended up with a 33K bias resistor.

Power supply

Although the virtues of various resistors, capacitors and valve brands can be debated ad infinitum, this project demonstrated how setting the internal voltages is equally import as a determining factor for tone and dynamics – if not more so.

During my initial tests, this Vibrolux didn't sound especially tweedy – and a quick voltage check revealed that the voltages were way too high. The Fender schematics allow for 20 per cent tolerance either way, but the first half of V1 was getting a plate voltage just below 250V, when the schematic specified 160V. The voltage on the 6V6 plates was more than 400V – when the specified voltage was just 330V.

The 470R resistor between the first two filter caps had been changed to 330R, and there was a 1K5 resistor connected to the selenium diode in the bias circuit – rather than the 6K8 shown on the 5E11 schematic 12. I had checked out several pictures of Vibrolux circuit boards while researching this project, and many had 1K5 resistors in that position. So be aware that Fender's published schematics don't always correspond with actual production specs.

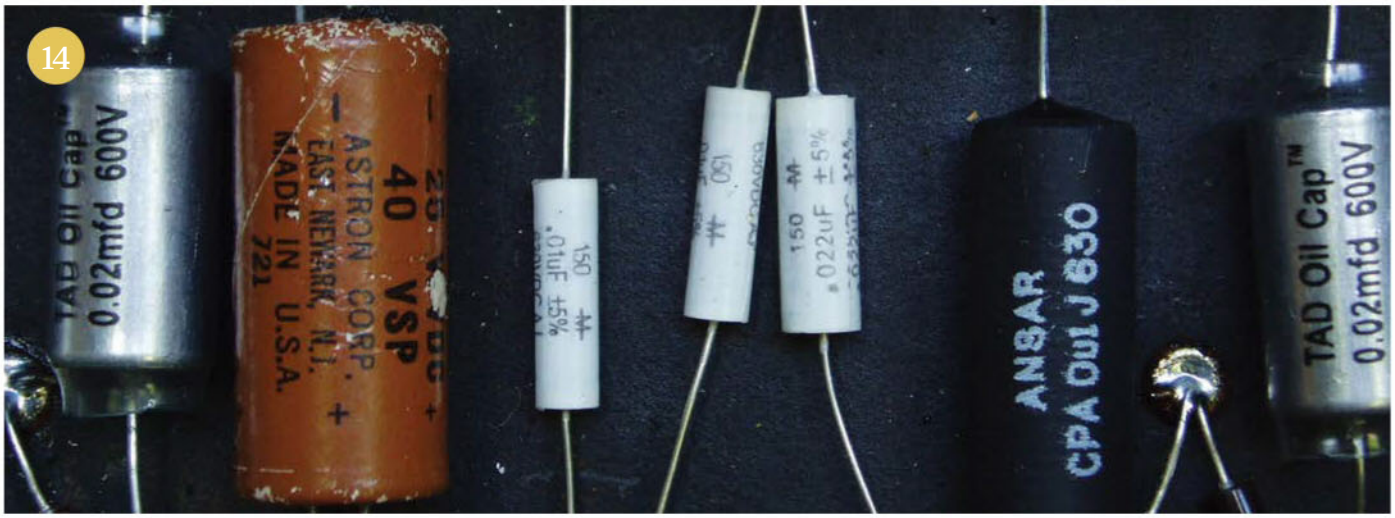
What followed was not exactly scientific. Instead, I began experimenting with various resistors in the power supply until I achieved the voltages I was looking for throughout. It should be stressed that this was achieved by using my ears just as much as a voltmeter.

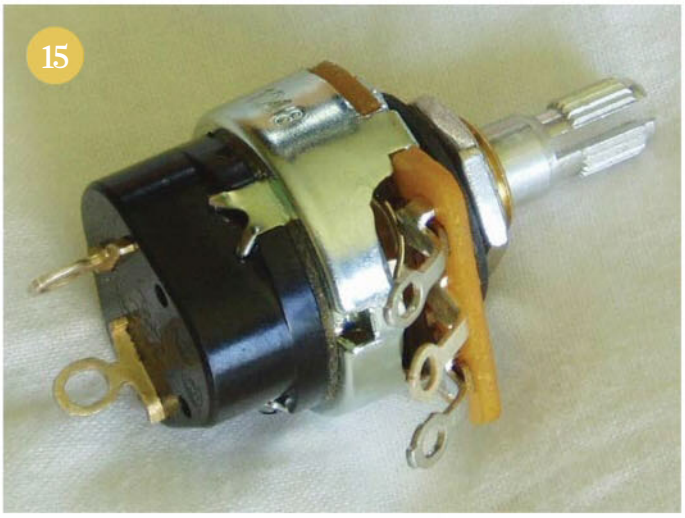
At higher plate voltages, the Vibrolux ran cleaner and clearer with a tight and focused bass response. Lower voltages corresponded with quick breakup, easy overdrive and a squishy or compressed response when the amp was being pushed hard.

I preferred preamp voltages that were bang-on tweed specs, but the power amp sounded better to me running at 375V. This figure was in between the 330V specified on the Vibrolux schematic and the 410V specified for a Princeton Reverb 13.

Remember that a Princeton output transformer had already been fitted in this Vibrolux. My findings may have been different with a Triad #108. In a sense, this Vibrolux has ended up with a tweed preamp running into a blackface-like power amp, so it overdrives and compresses nicely, but the power amp prevents excessive sag. >

13 The power supply was rebuilt using listening tests, as well as a voltmeter. Three resistor values were changed, along with one of the filter capacitors. High-wattage resistors are preferred for this application.





14 Changing the capacitors in the tremolo really brought it to life. We used these white Mallory 150s and a black Ansar Supersound. Hopefully, these will last another 50 years.

15 Lifting the feedback loop revealed yet another side of this brilliant little amp, so we decided to make this a switchable feature. This CTS push/pull pot was installed in place of the original tone pot.

16 Here's the feedback switch after installation. We kept the original tone capacitor, and the switch section was connected to the positive of the speaker jack and a 56K resistor back on the eyelet board. Again, this mod could be reversed.

17 The tweed re-covering process, step-by-step.

It's also worth knowing that the 5E11 Vibrolux with the later transformer is a few component values away from being a 6G2 Princeton. You can even run the Vibrolux with a GZ34 rectifier and get pretty close to a blackface tone – minus the reverb, of course.

Tremolo

No audio signal flows through the tremolo circuit and, in a tweed Vibrolux, essentially it's a simple oscillator that modulates the bias of the power valves. The valve tested fine, so it seemed that faulty capacitors were causing the weak tremolo in this amp.

Once the originals were removed and tested, it could be seen that they had drifted off spec, and some were leaky. I replaced the tremolo capacitors with Mallory 150s, making one small modification in the process – substituting a 0.1uF from the later 5F11 circuit for the stock 5E11 0.25uF cap that's tied to the depth control 14. This helped to reduce the pulsing low-frequency noise that was noticeable with the tremolo engaged. The Vibrolux tremolo really came into its own, producing deep wobbly throb with a much wider speed range.

Negative feedback

Another big difference between the Vibrolux and a 5E3 Deluxe is the use of negative feedback. Fender would connect the positive from the output transformer to a point in the preamp circuit to stabilise the amplifier and increase the clean headroom.

Clean headroom is not something we generally look for in low-power tweed amps, so when I disconnected the loop for Ed, he loved what he heard. The Vibrolux had more gain, a looser feel and loads more bite. We decided both configurations had their merits, so I replaced the tone control with a 1M push/pull pot 15 and 16.

Verdict

Ed carried out the final assembly when his cabinet came back from the restorers. The 70s 10-inch speaker wasn't up to much, so Ed had asked for a 12-inch speaker baffle to be fitted, and he installed a Celestion Blue. Despite attempts to tighten the valve sockets, the power and rectifier tubes still felt slightly loose, so attaching three valve retainers was deemed a wise precaution. It may seem incredible, but at the age of nearly 60 this amp has just gone back to work and it's probably sounding as good as, if not better than, ever.

PARTS LIST & SUPPLIERS

- **Mains plug** RS Components
- **Carbon composite resistors** RS Components
- **TAD oil capacitors** Hotrox
- **Mallory 150 capacitors** Allparts UK
- **Sprague electrolytic capacitors** Watford Valves
- **Valve retainers** Watford Valves
- **Push/pull switch** Watford Valves

HOW DOES ED RATE THE FINISHED REFURB?

"Following the rebuild, the '57 Vibrolux is now a simply staggering tone machine, excelling at all manner of tones – from whispering delicate cleans to full-on Delta blues, with gain and squish all controllable with your guitar's volume and tone pots. Winding down a Strat's volume control gives a touch-sensitive, delicate 'Hendrix-y' clean sound, whilst chords and notes still ring out with glassy natural compression and sustain.

"Wound up loud, there are hints of Bassman and Clapton's Bluesbreaker, as harmonics and overtones swallow and envelop longer notes, blooming into a musical sustaining feedback with a PAF-equipped Les Paul. It really does make pedals redundant.

"With a GZ34 rectifier, the amp takes on more of a blackface character, with more solidity in the low end and less raw aggression. Yet it's equally warm and enjoyable to play. The tremolo has a deep 3D quality that now feels an integral part of the amp's core tone. I often leave a little hint on just to add a subtle depth and movement to chords.

"The total cost of the amp, including restoration, equates to around £1,100 – and that's a bargain compared to 'boutique' replicas. '57 Lily (named after the lady who assembled the amp all those years ago) will hopefully have another 60 years of gig tales to tell, and huge thanks must go to Huw and to Mark at AF Custom Cabinets for the superb re-covering job."

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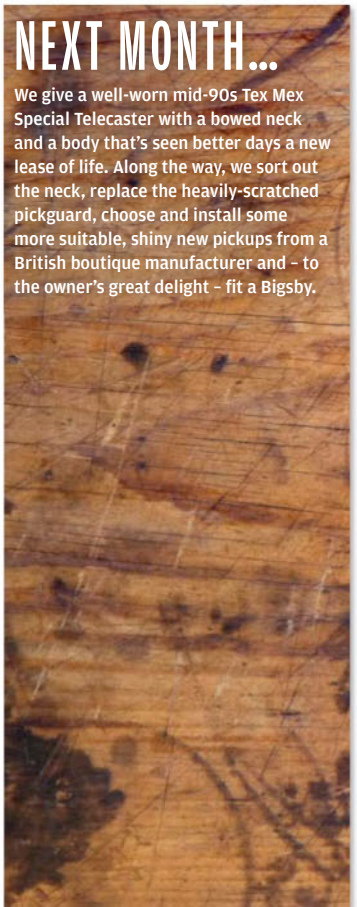

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"TELECASTER"

Fender Custom Shop Postmodern Journeyman Relic Stratocaster & Telecaster

It's now two decades since the Fender Custom Shop unleashed its first production Relics onto the market at the 1995 NAMM show, in the shape of a '51 Nocaster and '56 Mary Kaye Strat. Though artificial ageing continues to polarise opinion, it has undeniably been big business over the last 20 years, both for Fender and the numerous other companies who now offer anything from mildly dulled finishes to full-on 'tossed into the back of a pickup truck every night for 30 years, and some nights it fell out of the truck' levels of faux distress.

The Postmodern Series represents a magpie-like swoop through the Fender catalogue over the decades

The very idea that Fender is celebrating the 20th anniversary of the launch of brand new guitars made to look like beaten-up old ones is another example of pop culture eating itself. It's fitting, therefore, that the Winter NAMM show in January saw the Fender Custom Shop, now with Mike Lewis at the helm, debut a new type of artificially-aged finish – the Journeyman Relic – on the also-new-for-2015 and aptly-named Postmodern Series Strat and Telecaster.

Positioned between the existing Closet Classic and Relic finishes, 'used but not abused' seems to be the preferred description of the Journeyman Relic finish. To our eyes and fingers, this is some of Fender's most authentic relic'ing yet, certainly at the body end where the checked, yellowed and lightly dinged thin nitrocellulose finishes really look the part. The yellowing of the Olympic White finish lends the Strat an almost minty hue in a certain light, while the Telecaster's creamier Aged White Blonde has less visually dramatic crazing and allows more of the ash grain to show through. We like the restraint around the back of the neck; most of the lacquer remains intact on both instruments, and more often than not this is the case with genuine vintage guitars that we encounter. Necks that are worn right down to the wood are few and far between on the vintage market, but we're getting ahead of ourselves...

The idea behind the Postmodern Series is that it represents a magpie-like swoop through the Fender catalogue over the decades, picking up a subjective idea of the best bits along the way and combining them into the era-splicing Stratocaster and Telecaster models you see here. The range is rounded out by a Precision body/Jazz neck hybrid Postmodern Bass design (£2,739 for the Journeyman Relic), and all three instruments are also available with NOS nitrocellulose finishes (£2,489 for the guitars, £2,579 for the bass) if you fancy adding the dings yourself over time. We were hoping to get our hands on the bass as well as part of this review, but at the time of writing there was only one example in the UK, and it had already been swiped by a famous artist.

While the transition-era headstock logos and rather stark three-ply scratchplates scream 1965, both the Strat and Telecaster feature ash

The Journeyman relic'ing is perhaps Fender's best yet

The heel contour makes upper-fret access easier

Both guitars feature transition logos

bodies for an injection of early-50s flavour. The neck shapes and round-laminate 'boards, too, are very mid-60s, but the most radical departure from vintage templates is at the bolt-on neck joint; both guitars feature heels that are softened on the treble side to provide more comfortable access to higher registers. In combination with 241-305mm (9.5-12-inch) compound radius fingerboards, this makes for a much easier and more refined, boutique-like feel than the squared-off heel and 7.25-inch radius of old.

There are plenty of players for whom the fight of a more rounded 'board in combination with a heavy string gauge and medium action is all part of the Fender experience; but for those of us who are less inclined towards self-flagellation, but still want a vintage aesthetic, the kind of subtle, player-friendly design tweaks here mean that the untrained eye in the audience will simply see and hear a great-looking vintage-style Strat or Tele.

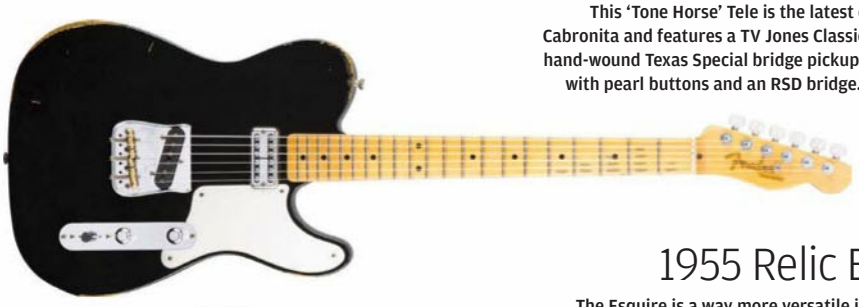
The Strat's ash body features relatively dramatic, figure-hugging contouring, while staggered tuner posts negate the need for a string tree and reduce friction in combination with vibrato use. From the factory, the Synchronized vibrato is set up with three springs and just over a semitone's pull-up on the low E, just under a semitone on the high E and a whole tone on the G string. If this set-up isn't to your tastes, fear not; alongside the certificate of authenticity, owner's manual, cable, plectrums and strap, >

Get them while they're hot

The Fender Custom Shop has unleashed some highly collectible and thoroughly desirable limited edition models for 2015. Here's a rundown of the Stratocaster and Telecaster models...

Relic Tele Caballo Tono

This 'Tone Horse' Tele is the latest evolution of the Cabronita and features a TV Jones Classic neck pickup, a hand-wound Texas Special bridge pickup, Sperzel tuners with pearl buttons and an RSD bridge. We like it a lot.



1955 Relic Esquire

The Esquire is a way more versatile instrument than appearances might suggest, but if you desperately need a neck pickup, this example comes with a conversion kit including a neck pickup, pickguard and control assembly.

20th Anniversary Relic Nocaster

20 years since the Relic phenomenon began, Fender celebrates with a limited run of 95 '51 Nocasters.

Ancho Poblano Strat

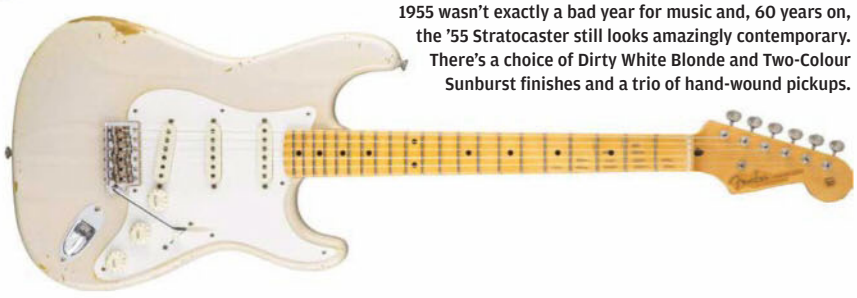
A huge neck, enormous frets and punchy new pickups make for a fiery and toneful combination. This is our pick of the bunch from the Custom Shop's class of 2015; it's a real tone monster!

20th Anniversary Relic Stratocaster

Another nod to the class of '95 as Fender recreates the '56 Mary Kaye Strat that appeared alongside the Nocaster.

1955 Relic Stratocaster

1955 wasn't exactly a bad year for music and, 60 years on, the '55 Stratocaster still looks amazingly contemporary. There's a choice of Dirty White Blonde and Two-Colour Sunburst finishes and a trio of hand-wound pickups.



LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...

Fender Custom Shop Postmodern Journeyman Relic Stratocaster

Fender's Road Worn '60s Strat £909 is less refined and more heavily aged, but considerably lighter on the wallet. The **Suhr Classic Antique £2,199** combines an aged nitro finish with modern tweaks; the look is classic, but it's built for speed.

Fender Custom Shop Postmodern Journeyman Relic Telecaster

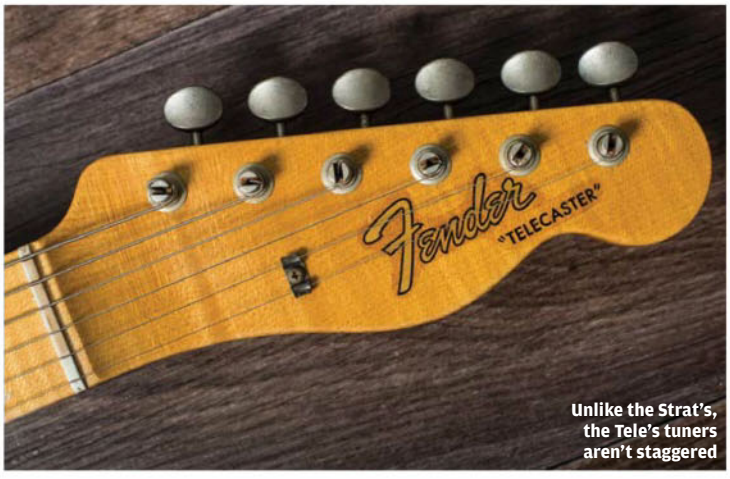
The **Tom Anderson T Classic £2,590** is a highly-evolved take on Leo's iconic design, with numerous options and a 12-14-inch conical fingerboard radius as standard. At the other end of the price spectrum, **ESP's LTD TE-202 £325** provides an affordable entry point into the world of distressed T-style electrics.

amongst the candy in the black vinyl hard shell case you also get a bridge cover, a smart (and extremely bloody useful) CruzTools toolkit and two extra vibrato springs.

There's no bridge cover or spare springs for the Postmodern Telecaster, of course, though the shape of its hardtail bridge is based on the vintage 'ashtray' cover outline. First introduced in 2013, the Tele's RSD bridge features a lower-profile tray than the classic Tele design. It's more comfortable in contact with the right hand and the trio of brass saddles (angled on the E/A and B/E combinations, while the middle saddle beneath the D/G strings looks split, it's actually machined from one piece of brass) provides more precise control over intonation in combination with a modern set of strings, but still imparts an early-50s character to the overall tonality. Many vintage Fender fans can be a little nervous of any hardware that doesn't follow the original lines, but the RSD bridge is both a visual and sonic reference to Fender's past that offers robust performance in the present.

In use

7-7.5lbs is a good medium-light weight for a Fender solidbody and, though the Tele is a little heavier than the Strat, it's certainly not excessively so; both guitars feel great when strapped on. Each instrument is acoustically very alive and resonant before we even plug in. So far, so very good.



Unlike the Strat's, the Tele's tuners aren't staggered

The Tele's maple 'board has only minimal faux wear

As hinted at earlier, both neck shapes are faithful to their mid-60s Oval C billing; it's interesting that while the Strat's neck is only approximately 1.5mm deeper at the 12th fret, it does seem more rounded overall than the Tele, which has a flatter feel in the palm. Like many of the genuine mid-60s Fenders we've encountered, both neck shapes have a non-linear taper; slim behind the nut, the profile of the carve fattens out quickly between the second and fifth fret.

If you aren't familiar with what we mean, it's a very similar shape to the current American Vintage '65 Stratocaster reissue, although the 7.25-inch fingerboard radius on that more vintage-faithful model makes for a slightly more old-school feel than either of the guitars here, with their compound radii. When experienced as a whole, the combination of conical radius 'board, heel contouring and relatively tall narrow jumbo fretwire on the Postmodern guitars makes big, high-register bends much less painful to execute than back in '65.

As with any factory-aged instrument, how these guitars look is only part of the story. The Journeyman relic'ing has a more subtle effect on the playing experience than a Heavy Relic treatment with exaggerated forearm wear and an abundance of exposed timber at the back of the neck. Here, 'playing' wear on the neck is limited to thin strips of exposed wood around the fingerboard edge, up to the third fret on the bass side and the fifth on the treble side, but there's still a 'comfortable shoes' vibe straight out of the case.

Swapping between these guitars with an otherwise identical amp and

The RSD bridge is a low-profile design with old-school tone

pedal set-up is revealing, and once again draws us into the Strat versus Tele debate that's now more than six decades old.

The Strat feels like the more cerebral choice; into spring reverb with a Klon Centaur-style boost pushing a 6V6 power stage, single-note, bridge-pickup lead lines sing with harmonic overtones, while the neck and middle pickups ring out beautifully in combination with rich clean chord voicings. Dig in harder and there's bags of throaty, percussive twang with plenty of pop and snap; it's a seriously dynamic instrument and a very classic-sounding Strat in all five switch positions. Fat '60s pickups or not, this feels more like a Strat for *Nowhere Man* and *Blood Sugar Sex Magik* than it does for heavier, thicker blues-rock styles, though the stability of the vibrato does allow you to let your inner Jimi take over the whammy bar without proceedings descending into a hopelessly out-of-tune mess.

The Strat feels the more cerebral choice... the Telecaster is the bad cop and the barely-restrained animal

The Telecaster, on the other hand, is the bad cop and the barely-restrained animal of the pair; where stacking another mild overdrive on top finds the Strat's bridge pickup sounding a little grainy even when its dedicated tone control is knocked back, the Tele's extra snarl and midrange push wins out. You just want to hit this thing hard; add some subtle slapback and a Bo Diddley beat and it's rock 'n' roll in excelsis.

As usual when we play a Custom Shop Telecaster, the ballsy bridge pickup is so much fun that we almost have to force ourselves to explore the other pickup positions, but there are big, soulful voices there, too, that excel for playing everything from swampy blues to cleaner R&B and soul chord-comping. Here, in its 'Twisted' incarnation, this Custom Shop Tele neck pickup's performance is a little bit more springy and Strat-like, too.

Ultimately, whether you prefer the Postmodern Strat or Tele will probably boil down to a hardwired, long-established preference for one or the other model, but if you are predominantly a Strat player who fancies a dalliance with a raunchy early 50s-style Telecaster bridge pickup tone without the sometimes-intimidating, beefy Nocaster neck shape that traditionally accompanies it, this could be a giant step on your road to Tele-addiction. The Postmodern Tele's neck may be 60s-inspired with the convenience of a compound fingerboard radius; but, sonically, this is a guitar that wants to wear a black guard and no mistake.

The Strat, on the other hand, is unlikely to tempt fully paid-up Tele lovers to switch their allegiance; it's simply a very well made, thoughtfully spec'd Strat with mid-60s cosmetics and a handful of stealthy nods to modernity that help make the whole playing experience a more comfortable ride.

Indeed, it might only be when you put either of these guitars down and revert to a more traditionally spec'd Fender solidbody that you appreciate just how comfortable that ride is.

KEY FEATURES

Fender Custom Shop Postmodern Journeyman Relic Stratocaster

- **PRICE** £2,659 (inc hardcase)
- **DESCRIPTION** Solidbody, double-cutaway electric. Made in USA
- **BUILD** Solid ash body with bolt-on quartersawn maple neck, mid-60s oval C-profile, 241-305mm (9.5-12") compound radius round-laminated rosewood fingerboard with 21 narrow jumbo frets, aged dot inlays and Micarta nut
- **HARDWARE** 6-saddle American Vintage Synchronized vibrato bridge, vintage-style staggered machineheads
- **ELECTRICS** 3x Custom Shop Fat '60s single-coil pickups with reverse wound/reverse polarity middle pickup. Master volume, neck/middle tone, bridge tone, five-position blade selector
- **SCALE LENGTH** 648mm/25.5"
- **NECK WIDTH** 42mm at nut, 51mm at 12th fret
- **NECK DEPTH** 19mm at first fret, 22.5mm at 12th fret
- **STRING SPACING** 35mm at nut, 56mm at bridge
- **WEIGHT** 3.1kg/7.0lbs
- **LEFT-HANDERS** No
- **FINISHES** Three-Colour Sunburst, Dakota Red, Black or Olympic White (as reviewed) with rosewood or maple fingerboard
- **CONTACT** Fender UK & ROI 01342 331700 **www.fender.com**

Guitar & Bass VERDICT

+ Attractive, understated Relic'ing
+ Comfortable neck shape and contouring
+ Less of a battle than a vintage original

– Tones a little polite for some

Combining a killer vintage look with boutique-style refinements, the Custom Shop has created yet another Strat with charm in abundance

8/10

KEY FEATURES

Fender Custom Shop Postmodern Journeyman Relic Telecaster

- **PRICE** £2,659 (inc hardcase)
- **DESCRIPTION** Solidbody, single-cutaway electric. Made in USA
- **BUILD** Solid ash body with bolt-on quartersawn maple neck, mid-60s oval C-profile, 241-305mm (9.5-12") compound radius round-laminated maple fingerboard with 21 narrow jumbo frets, dot inlays and Micarta nut
- **HARDWARE** RSD Telecaster bridge, vintage-style machineheads
- **ELECTRICS** 2x Custom Shop Twisted Tele single-coil pickups, master volume, master tone with Greasebucket, three-position blade selector
- **SCALE LENGTH** 648mm/25.5"
- **NECK WIDTH** 42mm at nut, 51mm at 12th fret
- **NECK DEPTH** 19mm at first fret, 21mm at 12th fret
- **STRING SPACING** 36mm at nut, 55mm at bridge
- **WEIGHT** 3.3kgs/7.3lbs
- **LEFT-HANDERS** No
- **FINISHES** Dakota Red, Black or Aged White Blonde (as reviewed) with rosewood or maple fingerboard
- **CONTACT** Fender UK & ROI 01342 331700 **www.fender.com**

Guitar & Bass VERDICT

+ In-tune, resonant and raunchy
+ Comfortable neck shape
+ Thoughtful design makes playability a breeze

– We'd prefer a single-ply black scratchplate

Is this a Nocaster in disguise? It certainly barks like one, and many players will prefer the slimmer neck. Addictive and hugely appealing

9/10

PRS Paul's Guitar

Paul Reed Smith's name is on all of his guitars, but this one combines his favourite features. **CHRIS VINNICOMBE** takes a look...

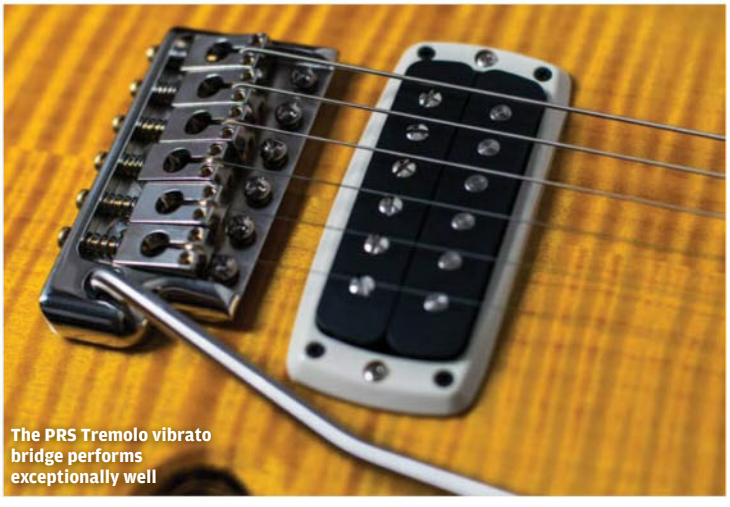
It's 30 years since a young Paul Reed Smith took 20 guitars to The NAMM Show and announced the arrival of a new brand that would force the big American guitar companies to up their game. Informed by a decade of repairing vintage instruments and building guitars for the likes of Carlos Santana and Howard Leese, the 'NAMM 20' guitars set the bar high, but that didn't stop Smith spending the next three decades in constant pursuit of innovation and refinement.

Back in 2015, we're confronted by Paul's Guitar: the production version of the very instrument played by the boss himself. PRS's stateside national sales manager, Jim Cullen, explains how the model came to make its way into the company's Core Line: "The Paul's Guitar was inspired by the Private Stock signature model, which was a 100-piece run released at Winter NAMM 2011. Based on the popularity of the signature run, we released a 200-piece signature model limited run in the Core Line at Winter NAMM 2012. It was then followed up with the 408 Standard and 408 Maple Top, introduced at the PRS Experience in September 2012.

"Paul began experimenting with winds on the narrow bass pickup in the 408, combined with the signature model electronics configuration (volume, tone, three-way toggle and two mini-toggle coil-tap switches) because he was looking for a way to cut through the mix a little more in his now larger band. He found that the narrower magnetic field of the 408N bass pickup, wound hotter and placed in the treble position, gave him the extra clarity he was looking for. "So, at Winter NAMM 2013, the Paul's Guitar was launched in two versions: a Private Stock Limited and an aesthetically 'stripped down' version in the Core Line, spec'd out with 'dirty' artist grade tops."

The rosewood headstock fascia, enlarged logo and brushstroke bird inlays elevate Paul's Guitar above the norm

The current Core Line Paul's Guitar shares many of the features of the 2013-14 model, but there are a handful of differences. Phase III locking tuners replace the previous Low Mass units, while instead of a 'dirty' artist grade top, there's now a flame maple top as standard, with a 10-Top or quilt maple available for an extra £499. In addition, you can choose between vibrato or hardtail models for no extra cost, while the Artist Package starts at £4,059.

The Honduran rosewood headstock fascia, enlarged logo and 'brushstroke' bird inlays elevate Paul's Guitar above the norm, while the two-piece flamed maple top is finished flawlessly in Faded Vintage Yellow – harking back to one of the most striking original colour offerings from the class of '85. Like the Vela we reviewed recently, the only visual flaw we can detect on very close inspection is the presence of what appears to be white buffing compound residue – likely used in >

The PRS Tremolo vibrato bridge performs exceptionally well

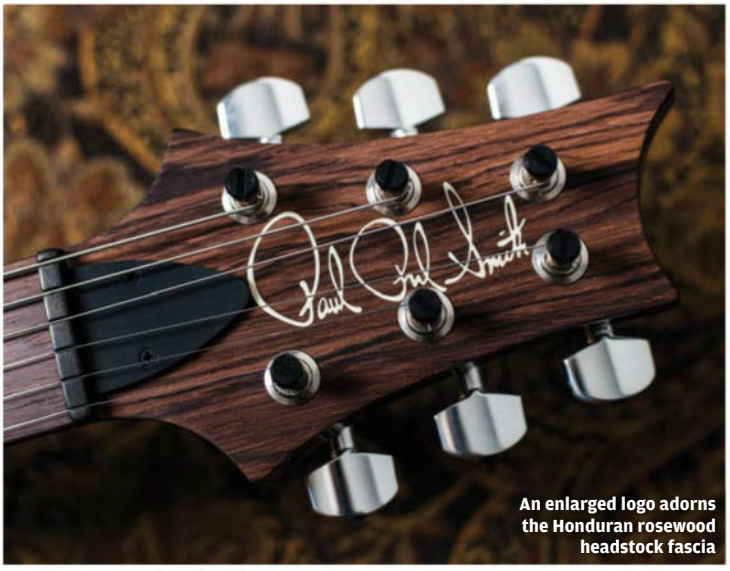
KEY FEATURES

PRS Paul's Guitar

- **PRICE** £3,125 (including hardcase)
- **DESCRIPTION** Solidbody, double-cutaway electric. Made in USA
- **BUILD** Mahogany body with carved flame maple top. Pattern mahogany neck with Honduran rosewood headstock fascia and Honduran rosewood, 254mm (10-inch) radius fingerboard with brushstroke bird inlays and 22 medium jumbo frets.
- **HARDWARE** Phase III locking tuners, PRS Tremolo vibrato bridge (PRS Stoptail with brass inserts available for no additional cost)
- **ELECTRICS** 408N Treble & 408N Bass humbuckers, volume, tone, three-way toggle pickup selector, 2x mini-toggle coil-split switches
- **SCALE LENGTH** 635mm/25"
- **NECK WIDTH** 43mm at nut, 52mm at 12th fret
- **NECK DEPTH** 21mm at first fret, 23mm at 12th fret
- **STRING SPACING** 36mm at nut, 53mm at bridge
- **WEIGHT** 3.6kgs/8.0lbs
- **LEFT-HANDERS** No
- **FINISHES** Antique White, Azul, Black, Black Cherry, Black Gold Burst, Blood Orange, Charcoal Burst, Faded Vintage Yellow (as reviewed), Faded Whale Blue, Gold Top, Gray Black, Honey, Jade, Royal Blue, Scarlet Red, Tortoise Shell, Vintage Sunburst, Violet
- **CONTACT** PRS Europe 01223 874301 **www.prsguitars.com**

Two mini-toggles provide access to single-coil voices

Brushstroke birds are the only fretboard inlay on offer


An enlarged logo adorns the Honduran rosewood headstock fascia

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...
The **Patrick James Eggle Macon Carved Top £3,595** is a simply stunning example of UK boutique guitar building. Look out for a review next issue. **Tom Anderson's Drop Top £2,900** has more of a luxury hotrod S-type vibe, but is big on versatility.

the fret polishing process – on some areas of the rosewood fretboard. It's no deal breaker, though, and as befits an instrument of twice the price of the S2 model, the 'board itself is of Honduran rosewood that's more attractive and exotic in appearance than the rosewood of unspecified origin on its stablemate.

As Cullen says, the narrow 408N Bass neck pickup is the same unit that debuted a few years ago on the 408; unlike the larger bridge pickup on the 408, the 408N Treble bridge pickup has the same footprint as the neck pickup and is simply wound with a few extra turns. Both pickups can be coil split individually via the pair of mini toggle switches between the volume and tone controls. Clever wiring minimises volume loss in single-coil mode: each switch disconnects the screw coil and adds 1,500 turns to the slug coil.

In use

Removed from its luxurious paisley hardcase and played acoustically, despite – or perhaps because of – its PRS Tremolo vibrato bridge, Paul's Guitar rings and resonates like a hardtail. The bridge arrives set from the factory with four springs attached and a tone's upward travel on the E, A, D and G strings, and a semitone on the B and E – it's such a stable and smooth set-up that we'd be loath to change it.

At 8lbs on the nose, this guitar is no featherweight – the previous incarnation was listed as having a lightweight mahogany back, but this time the specifications state simply 'mahogany' – but it balances so well on a strap that it feels like a significantly lighter instrument. The 'Pattern' neck shape is an update of the old Wide Fat profile, with a little less shoulder, based on Smith's pre-factory design. It's a subjective area, but we've always been of the opinion that, all other factors being equal, guitars with big necks sound better. We're right at home with the feel: it's a palm-filler alright, but it's unlikely to scare anybody off.

Plugged in, when compared to our reference Gibson fitted with 50s PAF replicas, Paul's Guitar immediately sounds thicker. The 408N pickups might look like mini-humbuckers, but their character is closer to a full-sized 'bucker; the bridge pickup in full humbucking mode has a slightly higher output, thicker mids and a shade less high-end bite than a PAF, none of which are negatives – it just sounds different: a little more refined and modern, with a fuller range. It's a similar scenario in the neck position, where the PRS is fatter and creamier for lead work, but the Gibson's lower output and more nasal voice makes it easier to retain clarity and separation when playing overdriven chordal rhythm parts.

Where Paul's Guitar races off into the sunset compared to a vintage-style Gibson is, of course, in the versatility stakes. In practice, the grainier split-coil voices – with only a very slight, barely perceptible volume drop-off from full 'bucker mode – are probably closer to the vintage-spec PAF-alikes when both are played with gain, though there's still more bass in this mode than from our Gibson's tighter-voiced humbuckers. The ability to switch to single-coil sounds without disappearing in a mix is a real boon – especially in combination with a pedal such as a Fuzz Face, that works far better with single coils than it does humbuckers – and mid-song switching quickly becomes intuitive.

Clean tones are perhaps where Paul's Guitar is most impressive – there's a bell-like purity and vocal quality, with touch sensitivity in spades in all pickup positions. Into spring reverb and a touch of slapback, it's lush and addictive; with such a well-behaved vibrato system, you'll find yourself playing fewer notes and sounding better.

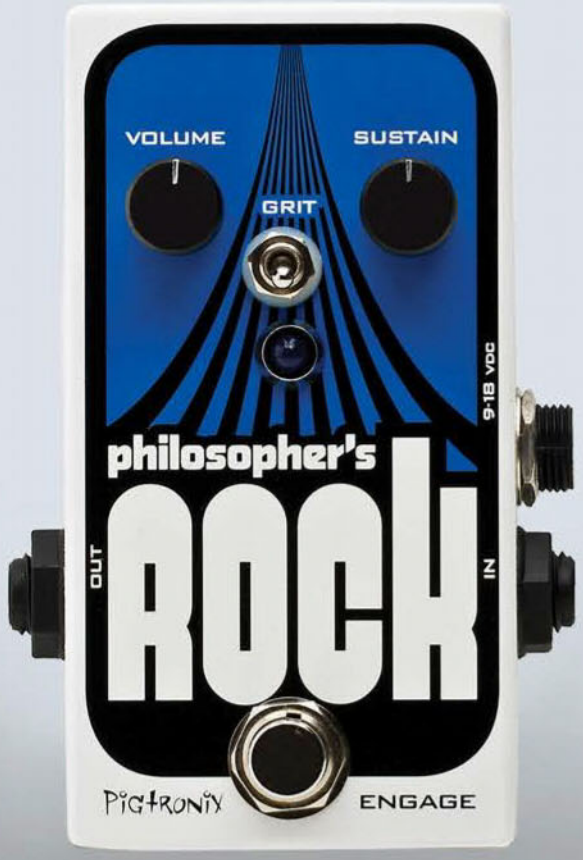
Guitar & Bass VERDICT

+ Tonal versatility
+ Resonant and dynamic
+ Trouble-free vibrato
– The price of admission is high, but at least it'll hold its value better than most

Visually, it's no shrinking violet, but thanks to relentless attention to detail, Paul's Guitar 'just works'

8/10

"SHUT UP AND PLAY YOUR GUITAR!"



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Jackson Ampworks The McFly

Jackson Ampworks' The McFly brings vintage Fender circuits into the present with some modern twists. **HUW PRICE** blasts off...

Jackson Ampworks is a small boutique amplifier company based in Fort Worth, Texas. Its design ethos combines an old-school 'simple is best' approach to signal path with modern manufacturing practices.

Build and finish quality is impressive to say the least. The laser-cut chassis has massive aluminium billet end plates, and huge transformers add considerable weight.

Mallory 150 signal capacitors and carbon composite resistors are mounted on an 1/8-inch printed circuit board, with two-ounce copper traces, and silver-plated Teflon wire is used throughout. Other features include centre-point star grounding, Alpha potentiometers and Neutrik connectors.

The McFly was designed to emulate the tones of small and simple Fender amplifiers from the 1950s and 1960s. Rather than choose between 6V6 and 6L6 valves, Jackson has installed a pair of each – and each pair can be used individually or in combination.

The choice of 6SN7 preamp valves indicates that the McFly is not intended to be a high-gain amplifier, because the amplification factor is substantially lower than a 12AX7's. But these octal valves were used very widely during the 1950s and are highly regarded for their tone in guitar and hi-fi amps.

Jackson has broken with tradition by choosing an over-spec'd 200-watt output transformer to ensure that tight low end is maintained at all levels. Bypassable power scaling is preferred to a master volume, and there's a six-way body switch for low-frequency voicing, that works in conjunction with a tone control. The bright switch places a Fender-style capacitor across the volume control and the 50s/60s switch re-voices the amp – presumably by altering voltages.

In use

The chassis is mounted upside-down in the cabinet and a cooling fan has been fitted to prevent overheating. Noisy fans can be a drag, but this one is quieter than the amp's noise floor – and the McFly runs very quietly indeed. Jackson's website shows the McFly in combo guise with a Celestion Gold Alnico speaker. There are two speaker outputs and an 8/16 impedance switch, so I ran the amp into an open-back cabinet loaded with a Celestion Gold.

I found the body switch effective and useful because it offers various degrees of bass roll-off at carefully chosen intervals. As well as helping to shape the bass and low mids, it can help to tighten up low-frequency response at higher gain levels. This retains focus and definition and puts you in control of any tweedy sponginess.

The valve switching is a tremendous feature and works flawlessly. All four power valves are cathode-biased JJs and they're arranged with a 6V6 and 6L6 pairing to drive each phase of the waveform. The valve switch is labelled 6V6/both/6L6, so in addition to three tones, you get three power levels.

The McFly was designed to emulate the tones of small and simple Fender amplifiers from the 1950s and 1960s

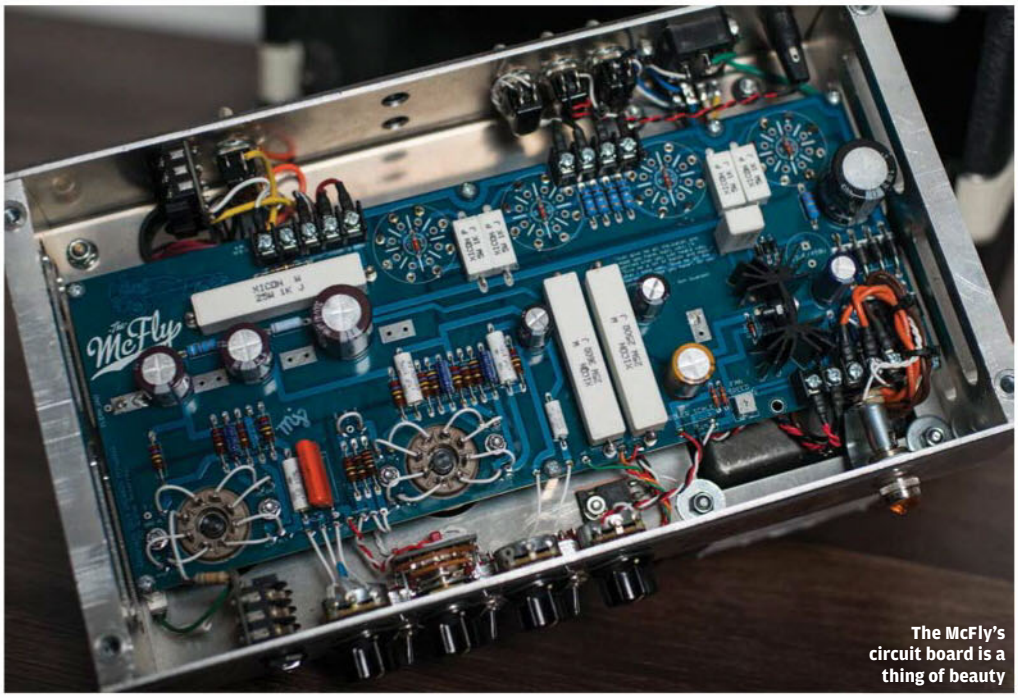
It's also a fantastic way to experience the differences between these two iconic power valves properly. The 6V6 side effectively pushes the >

Minimal but powerful controls unlock a range of classic tones

KEY FEATURES

Jackson Ampworks The McFly

- **PRICE** £1,550
- **DESCRIPTION** Single-channel valve head with power scaling, made in USA
- **POWER RATING** 13/25/46-watt (clean), 18/40/70-watt (overdriven)
- **VALVES** 2x 6SN7, 2x 6V6, 2x 6L6
- **FRONT PANEL** 2 inputs, normal/bright switch, volume, body, 60s/50s switch, tone, 6V6/both/6L6 switch, power
- **REAR PANEL** 2 speaker outputs 8/16 Ohm switch, power scaling bypass switch, standby and power switches
- **SPEAKER** n/a
- **DIMENSIONS** 355mmx216mmx209mm
- **WEIGHT** 35lbs/15.9kg
- **CONTACT** Peach Guitars 01376 553016 **www.jacksonampworks.com**



The McFly's circuit board is a thing of beauty

Power scaling can be bypassed around the back

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...
The lower-power **Carr Skylark £1,999** produces decade-spanning Fender-like tones with onboard reverb and attenuation. The 35-watt **Tone King Sky King £2,189** uses a pentode/ultralinear switch to bridge the 50s/60s divide, and comes with an Ironman attenuator. Utilising a tweed/blackface voltage switch, the **Lazy J 40 £1,978** is another great Fender-derived option, offering flavours of both eras.

midrange with both the upper and lower frequencies slightly rolled off.

In contrast, the 6L6s have a wider frequency response with extended lows and more airy treble. The midrange is probably much the same as the 6V6s, but it's less apparent due to the extra bass and treble. There's also much less compression and a quicker transient response that can lend a percussive edge to chords and single notes.

As hoped, the 'both' setting provides the best of both worlds. It is noticeably louder, plus combining the 6V6s with the 6L6s means you keep the full frequency range while simultaneously fattening up the midrange.

Regardless of valve selection, the 50s setting is slightly louder than the 60s setting and the mids are less scooped. It doesn't take much to push the McFly into overdrive, and the key to clean headroom, and hitting the sweet spot where playing dynamics control the dirt, is learning how headroom decreases as body is increased.

With the octal front end, I had expected a slightly softer and sweeter treble response. In reality, the McFly's sound is naturally bright through a Celestion Gold, and it can veer into edginess. That's OK, because most amps do, but the McFly's tone control takes some getting used to.

Rather than thinking of it as a treble roll-off, as described on Jackson's website, it makes more sense to use it as a treble boost. I kept the tone knob most of the way anti-clockwise to dial in tones that I found comfortable and familiar. For the most part, I felt no need to engage the bright switch, even

Using a pair 6V6s and 6L6s in unison offers the best of both worlds

with humbuckers. However, it does add a nice glassy sheen to cleaner sounds.

Cranked up, the McFly can generate extreme levels of overdrive. Beyond its sweet spot, at around one o'clock, the tone takes on a slightly fizzy edge that is more Marshall than Fender, but that could be attributable to the Celestion.

At higher levels, the McFly becomes a lot less sensitive to volume control manipulations. To control your tone from a guitar, I found the lower-level input more conducive, and it worked really well with a clean boost in front.

With the power control set for minimum attenuation, I could not hear any difference – whether it was bypassed or not. It was an encouraging start, but as power is attenuated the McFly's tone gradually acquires an oddly ragged distortion with an uneven decay.

It's not entirely dissimilar to a fuzzbox or overdrive that's being starved of current, but Jackson's power scaling is most effective when it is used subtly. Very low power settings are not especially musical, and background noise levels do not decrease along with the guitar signal. Some may feel that the 200-watt output transformer results in less sonic character, but it does make for a tone that's more usable and less niche. The power scaling did not particularly impress me, but the multiple output valve idea is excellent – and it works superbly in this amp.

The Fender connection might be even more convincing with the addition of some Jensen-style speakers, rather than a Celestion Gold, and maybe a touch of reverb, but the McFly is a very well made amp that does succeed in capturing an era-spanning range of classic Fender-like tones, while extending the tonal range, dynamic response and user controllability.

Guitar & Bass VERDICT

+ Range of classic Fender-style tones
+ Innovative power valve switching
+ Easy overdrive
+ Very effective voicing switches
+ Bypassable power scaling
+ Very well built

– Power scaling gets gritty low down

The McFly was designed to emulate 50s and 60s Fender tones, and it succeeds thanks to some clever switching and the way both tube types are combined in the power amp

8/10

THIS IS THE SOUND

VINTAGE MODIFIED '68 CUSTOM GUITAR AMPLIFIERS

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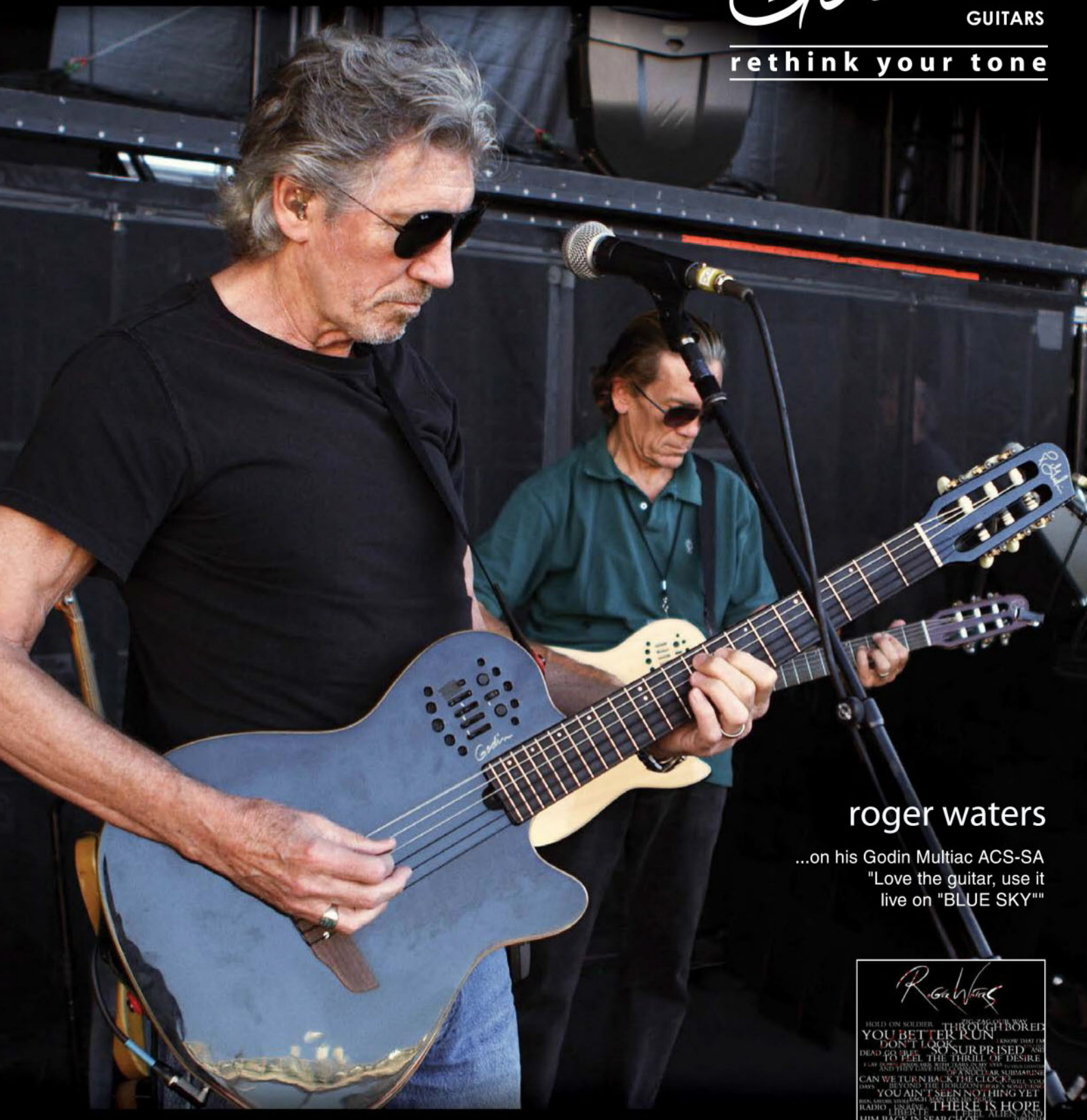

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Check out Roger's latest release
The Roger Waters Collection
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Faith FSGNBSY Neptune Signature

The new Signature series pairs British luthier Patrick Eggle's lengthy acoustic-building experience with Indonesian manufacturing. **RICK BATEY** keeps the Faith

Faith acoustics combine all the know-how of the UK's own Patrick James Eggle with high-quality Indonesian manufacturing – and at the very top of the line lies the Signature series, which makes use of British-sourced timbers rarely seen in luthiery, including bog oak and London plane. The best-looking wood option of all comes on this Neptune Signature; it uses solid rippled sycamore, the exact Blighty equivalent of American flamed big leaf maple, for the back and sides. It's delicious-looking stuff, stripey and characterful, enhanced beautifully by a rich caramel-tinted 'bronze' stain and the guitar's all-over gloss finish. We're off to a handsome start. Very handsome indeed, in fact.

In terms of design and dimensions, this model is pretty much a lower-cost version of Eggle's high-end, UK-made Saluda Cutaway. The Neptune's top is solid red cedar, X-braced with quarter-sawn 'piano grade' spruce; a wide band of green abalone sets off the soundhole, the bridge is Indonesian macassar ebony with ebony pins, and the whole body is bound in rosewood. There's a rosewood back strip, too.

The neck is mahogany, fastened to the body by hidden internal bolts, and topped by a stripy macassar ebony fingerboard with a single stylised position marker at the 12th fret. The swoopy headstock is faced in rosewood and carries PJE's signature, plus a buttery-smooth set of chromed Grover Rotomatics with ebony buttons. Overall, build quality and finish are excellent – and the neck-set is perfect, with a healthy 5mm of saddle.

This Faith is different. It's crisp and contemporary, but there's a warmth and immediacy straight out of the case

In use

The Faith's neck is a wide 45mm at the nut and medium in depth, and the 16-inch radius fingerboard has 20 low, wide, polished frets. Our example's set-up is impeccable: the action is low and buzz-free, the intonation is fab, and it's a fast player with tons of room for both hands... though some might find the gloss neck a bit sticky.

Some Faith guitars we've played before have erred a little on the side of brightness, but this one's different. It's crisp and contemporary, for sure, but there's a warmth and immediacy straight out of the case – that'll be the wide-open quality of the cedar top coming into play – while the generously-sized soundbox adds a sonorous, almost tenor vocal-like depth to the whole shebang. The upshot is a guitar that sounds large, deep, polished and grand with both pick and fingers. Despite its size, it isn't over-burdened with bass: it's rather well balanced, in fact, and although drop D works well, for C you might want to go up a gauge. Moving to the middle strings, the Faith sounds very responsive and loud, and this carries on right up the neck until it merges into thick, fat trebles.

The key to any British/overseas guitar-making operation is whether the UK team can keep on top of quality control as well as if the manufacturing were under their noses. We think Faith does. In a review of a £689 FRMG Mars not long ago, we said it would be hard to criticise at twice the price; this *is* twice the price, so it had better be good... and it is. It's cleanly built, lush and important-sounding, and it ticks a lot of 'boutique' boxes – but at a price far lower than any single UK luthier could manage. That's neat.

Guitar & Bass VERDICT

+ Big sound with fingers and pick
+ Excellent playability
+ Responsibly sourced timbers
+ A lot of guitar for the money

– No electro option
– Wider neck won't be for everyone
– No scratchplate, so be careful

A UK-made PJE Saluda in cedar/maple would cost a whopping £3,700; this gives a big dose of that feel for 40 per cent of the cost

9/10

KEY FEATURES

Faith FSGNBSY Neptune Signature Bronzed Sycamore

- **DESCRIPTION** Flat-top acoustic guitar. Made in Indonesia
- **PRICE** £1,499 inc. hard case
- **BUILD** Solid red cedar top, solid rippled British sycamore back and sides, rosewood binding, green abalone rosette, mahogany neck, macassar ebony fingerboard, single 12th-fret inlay, ebony bridge, bone nut and saddle, Grover Rotomatic 18:1 tuners
- **ELECTRICS** None
- **LEFT-HANDERS** No
- **FINISH** Clear gloss
- **SCALE LENGTH** 648mm/25.5"
- **NECK WIDTH**
  Nut 45mm
  12th fret 55mm
- **DEPTH OF NECK**
  First fret 22mm
  10th fret 24mm
- **STRING SPACING**
  Nut 37mm
  Bridge 57mm
- **WEIGHT** 2.15kg/4.7lbs
- **CONTACT** Barnes & Mullins
  01691 652449
  www.faithguitars.com

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE... The **Furch/Stonebridge G23CRC £1,539** is a cutaway mini jumbo with a cedar top. The **Tanglewood TSR 3 £1,549** is a fine sitka/rosewood mini-jumbo designed by Michael Sanden. Or splash out: **Alister Atkin** makes a **Maple Series** from **£2,899**.

PERFECTION

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tc electronic

EBS Red Label MultiComp, DynaVerb & Red Twister

The Swedish bass kings dip their toes into murky six-string waters with three new stompboxes. **SIMON BRADLEY** takes a look

EBS is one of the biggest names in specialised bass equipment, and many renowned four- and five-stringers ply their wares using the Swedish company's heads, cabs and effects: Sir William of Sheehan, the wonderful Tal Wilkenfeld and Lamb Of God's John Campbell are but three notable examples.

EBS has now turned its attention to guitarists, and the opening salvo is the release of these three stompboxes under the Red Label banner: the company's range of bass pedals, effects and preamps is dubbed Black Label.

All three, while built in China, were conceived and developed at the EBS headquarters in Bromma, just a few clicks west of Stockholm; and before we focus on each in more detail, let's look at a few features that are common to all.

Each pedal can be powered by a PP3 battery, with the compartment residing beneath a baseplate that can be detached by removing four screws. However, they can also take juice from an optional 9V 100mA PSU and, certainly in the case of the DynaVerb, we – and EBS – suggest you do just that.

Each features either an internal trim pot or a set of micro switches, which we'll expand on in due course, and the top panel features a pair of pots and a selection of mode-selecting slider switches. All also offer true bypass and a red operational LED, and have tank-like construction.

MultiComp

There's a dark voodoo that surrounds the use of any compressor, be it in a guitar or studio set-up, but the benefits shouldn't be underestimated. Vital in all recording scenarios, compression can add a great deal to your guitar tone, too, regardless of how subtle the effect can undoubtedly be.

There's a dark voodoo that surrounds the use of any compressor, but the benefits shouldn't be underestimated

The MultiComp provides three distinct types of compression: TubeSim, MultiBand and Normal, which are selected via the dedicated slider, plus comp/limit and gain pots. For additional control, there's a side-mounted active/passive button that enables you to tailor the operation depending on how you're using the unit. We stuck with passive throughout our testing, but if your guitar is loaded with, for example, a set of EMG pickups, flick it over to... yep... active.

When in MB mode, you can use a pair of internal trim pots to independently adjust the threshold of the hi and lo bands, up to a maximum of +6dB from what EBS calls 'the factory setting'.

In use

TubeSim mode adds warmth to clean tones, and can really help with fattening up vintage-voiced singlecoils for both chords and single notes. With more dirt on the amp, set comp/limit down low and the gain to a higher level than the dry signal and you have a more than usable boost for bluesy, low and mid-drive solos. Needless to say, the sustain is also enhanced.

MultiBand is perfect for those classic funky chops, and if the hi band's threshold is set just right even your old Les Paul can get on down; using something such as a Telecaster, you'll really have trouble making your feet behave. In short, this is an impressive compressor that we're confident will improve your tone – as it did ours. >

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...

MultiComp

The **Boss CS-3 £59** is arguably the most familiar stompbox compressor available today, and it's the cornerstone of many a famous board. For slightly rounder edges and a more organic performance, don't miss the **Keeley 4-Knob Compressor £159**

DynaVerb

The **TC Electronic Hall Of Fame £105**, that includes 10 reverbs and the inspired TonePrint function, has a place on just about anyone's pedalboard. Boss has crammed myriad features into the **RV-6 £105**, and it's also well worth a spin. Like it gnarly? Try the **EHX Holy Grail Max £100**

Red Twister

Everyone has their favourite modulation pedal: ours is the **EHX Electric Mistress £69**. **DigiTech's X-Series Multi-Chorus £42** has always been excellent value, while the **MXR M117R £149** is surely sufficiently versatile to satisfy your flanging needs.

DynaVerb

Hidden within the DynaVerb's copper-coloured chassis are no fewer than eight specific reverb types, split between three modes: hall, plate and room. A vertical three-way slider selects the modes, while its horizontal sibling sets the specific types: Room mode offers just two types of reverb, while hall and plate provide three each.

The DynaVerb is equipped with stereo inputs and outputs and, as well as being intended for use by guitarists in the usual ways, EBS has included functionality for dedicated studio use, too. Housed within the unit are two small switches that can set the operation to parallel mode to this end. We'll stick with the guitar side of things in this review, but we have little doubt that it will sound pretty good when used for recording as well.

In use

There's a great deal to get excited about here, and the plate options are especially worthy of mention. Use Classic Plate to add a toasty ambience, or the less expansive yet equally effective Vintage Plate to give your tone a true shot in the arm. In contrast, Large Room, set to maximum, is perfect for conjuring up those dreamy Richard Hawley-style moments.

This is a fairly restrained reverb – there are no booming cathedrals or Eventide-style space effects on offer here – and some players may also bemoan the lack of a spring simulation. However, as digital recreations of such are always second best to the real thing, we don't have too much of an issue with that here – just play about with the reverbs on offer and enjoy...

Red Twister

This analogue modulation pedal offers two chorus modes: heavy and soft, alongside a flanger, and all three are controlled by depth and speed pots. The operational LED helpfully dims in time with the speed setting and, for greatly increasing the sonic width, there's also the option of using stereo outputs.

The Red Twister's internal trim pot sets the mix – and this causes us something of a problem. Unlike the other two pedals on test here, we can't help feeling that this function is too important to be inconveniently hidden away, and it could compromise the use of the unit. We, like many other guitarists, fix pedals to our board with cable ties – and although snipping the pedal free and taking the baseplate off to access the mix pot isn't an enormous chore, it's undoubtedly an annoyance – and one that we feel could have been addressed.

In use

Soft mode is absolutely lovely, with plenty of chorus-y shimmer, which is made all the more toneful by the pedal's intrinsic analogue warmth. Meanwhile, heavy – which slathers on further layers of modulation – sounds great when playing through two amps.

Soft mode is lovely, with plenty of chorus-y shimmer – which is made more toneful by the analogue warmth

The flanger, too, is just fine, and we're glad that our initial misgivings concerning the lack of resonance and/or delay time pots didn't compromise the effect too drastically. That said, we were unable to dial in a suitable 70s-style Jet flange, but we did enjoy playing with a Leslie-flavoured throb.

We're disappointed to find ourselves a little underwhelmed by the Red Twister. Don't get us wrong, it's a high-quality pedal, but whether it offers enough to cause you to swap out your existing chorus or flanger remains to be seen.

KEY FEATURES

EBS MultiComp

- **DESCRIPTION** Analogue dual-band compressor pedal with three modes – TubeSim, MultiBand and Normal – and internal threshold trim pots. Made in China
- **PRICE** £149
- **CONTROLS** Comp/limit and gain pots, three-way mode selector, active/passive switch, two internal threshold trim pots, mono ¼" input and output
- **FEATURES** True bypass, effect on/off indicator, 9-12V DC external power input, battery compartment
- **DIMENSIONS** 70(W) x 115(H) x 35mm(D)
- **CONTACT** Sound Technology 01462 480000 **www.ebssweden.com**

Guitar & Bass VERDICT

+ Three excellent modes
+ Versatile performance
+ Independently adjustable Hi and Lo bands

– Somewhat expensive

As stompbox compressors go, they don't get much better than this. With a wide tonal palette and plenty of options, it could last you for an entire career

7/10

KEY FEATURES

EBS DynaVerb

- **DESCRIPTION** Digital stereo reverb pedal with a total of eight separate reverb types, plus stereo inputs and outputs and an optional parallel mode function for studio use. Made in China
- **PRICE** £159
- **CONTROLS** Reverb and tone pots, two three-way type selectors, stereo ¼" input and outputs, two internal micro switches to engage Parallel mode
- **FEATURES** True bypass, effect on/off indicator, 9-12V DC external power input, battery compartment
- **DIMENSIONS** 70(W) x 115(H) x 35mm(D)
- **CONTACT** Sound Technology 01462 480000 **www.ebssweden.com**

Guitar & Bass VERDICT

+ Wonderful sounds
+ Plenty of options
+ Use as a studio effect
+ Stereo ins and outs

– Needs a PSU
– No spring reverb sim

A high-quality reverb, offering myriad options and numerous uses. Well worth trying out, both onstage and in the studio

8/10

KEY FEATURES

EBS Red Twister

- **DESCRIPTION** Analogue chorus and flanger pedal with three modes and a stereo output. Made in China
- **PRICE** £149
- **CONTROLS** Depth and speed pots, three-way mode selector, internal mix trim pot, mono ¼" input and stereo output
- **FEATURES** True bypass, effect on/off indicator, 9-12V DC external power input, battery compartment
- **DIMENSIONS** 70(W) x 115(H) x 35mm(D)
- **CONTACT** Sound Technology 01462 480000 **www.ebssweden.com**

Guitar & Bass VERDICT

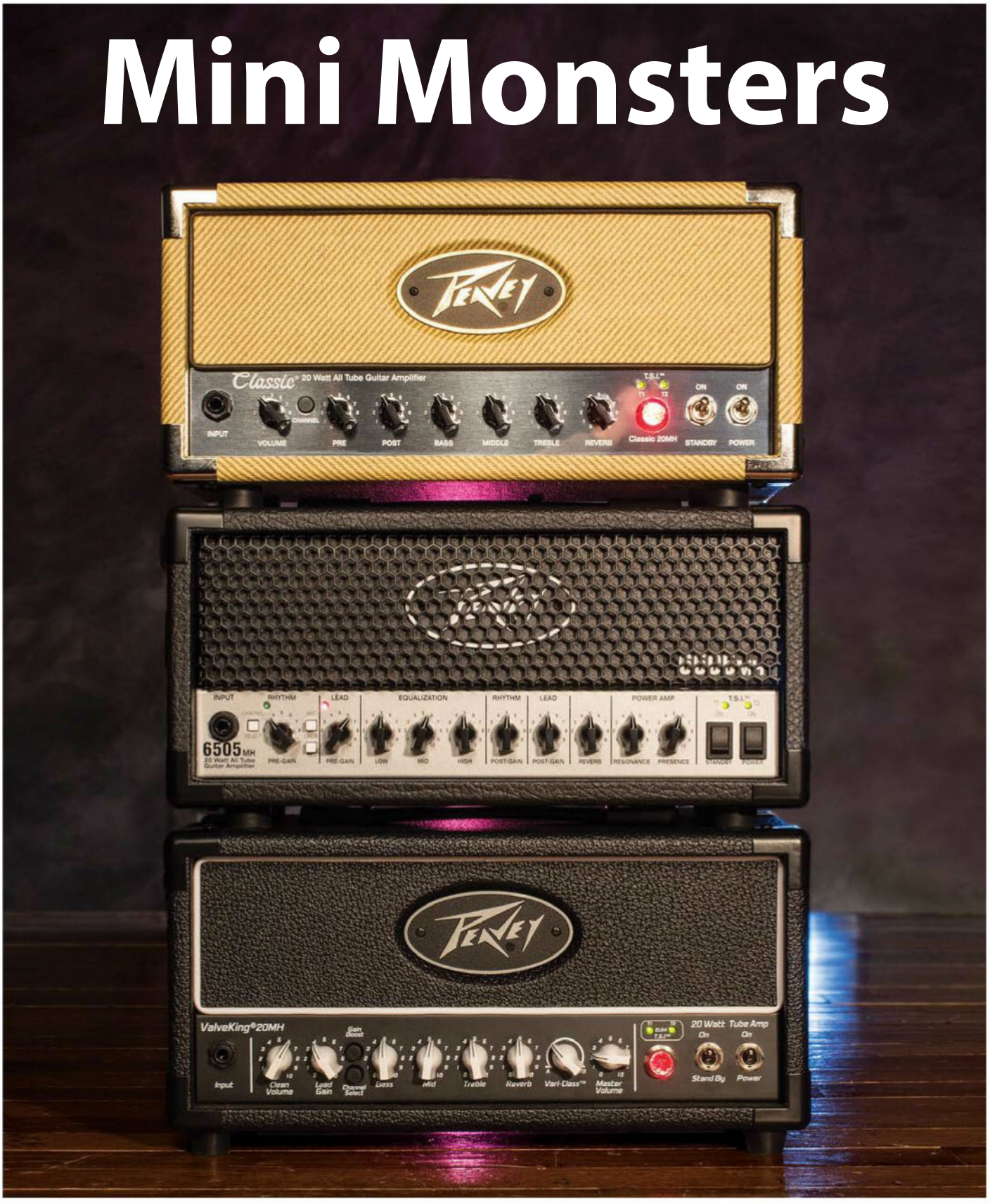
+ Lovely analogue warmth
+ Good tones
+ Stereo outputs

– Inconveniently placed mix trim pot
– A little underwhelming

A perfectly good modulation pedal with plenty of options. Let down by the out-of-the-way mix trim pot, but try one and make up your own mind

7/10

Mini Monsters



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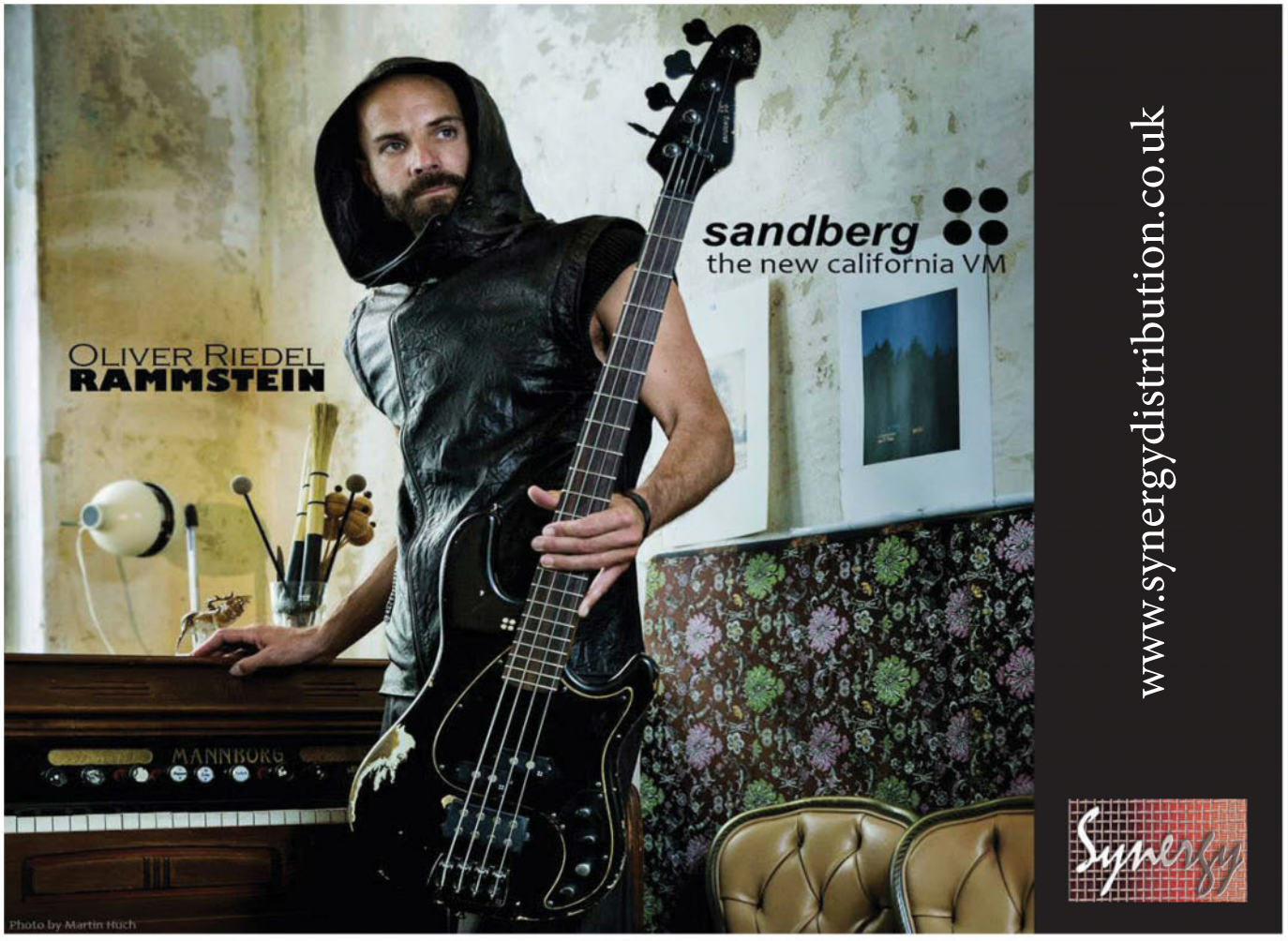
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TC Electronic Viscous Vibe & Helix Phaser

These TonePrint-tweakable stompboxes offer modulation with a psychedelic flavour. **RICHARD PURVIS** listens to the flower people

If you've just got back from a three-year Antarctic expedition with no access to news, allow us to fill you in: Germany won the World Cup, Lucy Beale was killed off in Eastenders, and you can now load new sounds into stompboxes by holding a phone against a guitar pickup. Sorry if that last one comes as a bit of a shock.

We've seen enough of TC Electronic's TonePrint pedals now to know that the concept is more than a gimmick – it's genuinely useful, and it works with immaculate simplicity. Being able to download new tones via your PC or Mac using a USB cable is canny enough, but the TonePrint smartphone app – now available for Android as well as iPhone – offers a wireless alternative that would have Captain Kirk nodding in admiration. It really is as straightforward as selecting the sound you want and pressing 'Beam to pedal' to send it through the guitar as a coded audio signal. If you don't like it, zap in another one instead. But don't throw that USB cable away – you can use it to do deep-level tweaking with the free TonePrint Editor software (for PC, Mac and iPad).

Of course, it isn't all about TonePrint. Both of these new additions to the range have their own factory sounds too, and you might well find that, beyond twiddling the knobs on the top, you never feel the need to tamper with the tones that are already in there. That is, depending on how good they sound...

The TonePrint concept is more than just a gimmick – it's genuinely useful, and it works with immaculate simplicity

Viscous Vibe

TC spent many hours testing prototypes of this pedal alongside an original Shin-ei Uni-Vibe from the 60s (as used by Jimi at Woodstock) to make sure of nailing its vintage wibbly-wobbly tones. That unit was inspired by the Leslie rotating speaker, arguably the godfather of all modulation effects, but the idea of modern vibe pedals is not to make your guitar sound like a cheesy Hammond organ: it's a liquid sound that lies between chorus and phasing; 'Viscous' is an apt name for it.

Encased in a compact shell of muted forest green, the Viscous Vibe has the expected controls for speed and intensity, plus a volume knob for matching the effect to your bypass signal. The three-way toggle on the left allows you to switch between chorus and vibrato flavours, just like a Uni-Vibe, while the middle setting is where the editable TonePrint lives. There are stereo outputs, but it will work normally in mono if the second one isn't used.

Unscrew the base of the pedal, easily done with a coin, and as well as the battery compartment you'll find two tiny switches whose functions are hidden deep within the manual: one is for selecting true or buffered bypass, while the other offers a 'kill-dry' option for use within a parallel FX loop – muting the (analogue) dry part of the signal, even when the effect is >

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...

Viscous Vibe

The **MXR Uni-Vibe £115**, is as close to an official reissue of the original Shin-ei wobblebox as you'll get, with switchable chorus and vibrato modes. But the ultimate Leslie-based modulation unit has to be the **Roger Mayer Voodoo-Vibe+ £399**, which also has a pure tremolo mode and sounds all kinds of luscious.

Helix Phaser

The **Electro-Harmonix Bad Stone £49**, is a compact new version of one of EHX's coolest ever pedals, a richly swooshy phaser with a clever 'manual' mode for fixed filter effects. For ultimate versatility, the **Pigtronix Envelope Phaser £239**, combines traditional set-speed phasing with an envelope-following mode.

bypassed. Well, at least that's what it's supposed to do – unfortunately, neither switch was functional on our review unit. Whoops.

In use

Now this is some serious modulation. Don't be fooled by the word 'chorus': in this mode, it pulsates richly and smoothly, but much more deeply than a standard chorus pedal. The vibrato side shares the same basic voice but brings an element of pitch wobble; this can be quite unsettling when overdone, but is a lot of fun at low-intensity settings, especially when used in stereo – your brain will think it's gone scuba diving.

The default TonePrint sound is somewhere between the two, but whip out your smartphone and there's very little you can't do here. At the time of writing, there are 19 TonePrints available for the Viscous Vibe, 10 of them 'signature' sounds from name players, and they range from delicate wooziness to full-on funky auto wah. Each can be adjusted in minute detail using the TonePrint Editor, and you can even save your own TonePrints; it's just a shame you can't have more than one installed in the pedal at a time.

A great Leslie-esque touch is the way the effect winds up or down gradually when you adjust the speed control

A great Leslie-esque touch is the way the effect winds up or down gradually when you adjust the speed control, and even slows as it gently fades out after you turn the pedal off. There is, however, just a hint of a bump in the signal about two seconds later when it switches out of the circuit completely. Presumably this won't apply in true bypass mode.

Helix Phaser

The chewy swirl of the phaser has made itself heard in every decade of rock music since the release of the mighty MXR Phase 90 in the early 70s. That little orange box, still in production today, is famously a one-knob wonder – but TC's entry into the field of phase has no less than four controls: speed, depth, feedback and mix. Add a three-way toggle for vintage, smooth or TonePrint settings and this should be about the most versatile compact phaser you've ever stomped on. Again, we get stereo outputs and again those bypass and kill-dry switches hidden inside the enclosure – the difference being that this time they work.

In use

Some phasers sound psychedelic without playing anything – the slow rising and swooping of the background hiss is a kind of cosmic music in itself. You don't get that with the Helix; it's pretty much hiss-free, which is good in one sense, but suggests an effect that's more focused on the meat of the midrange. This is true in vintage mode, where faster settings can sound similar to the Viscous Vibe, and even more so with the vocal-like 'smooth' voicing.

The TonePrint presets offer some interestingly extreme options, especially if you crank the feedback, but there's not much you can do to cool down the overall EQ/gain profile. I have a couple of nice analogue phasers – an original Electro-Harmonix Bad Stone and a Pearl PH-03 – and the Helix couldn't match either for scooped-out smoothness, no matter how many parameters I tweaked in the Editor. It may be that the really sweet stuff is beyond the basic architecture of the pedal. Run the Helix into some high-gain distortion, though, and you'll be glad of the way it keeps the body of your bypass tone intact.

KEY FEATURES

TC Electronic Viscous Vibe

- **DESCRIPTION** Vibrato pedal, made in Thailand
- **PRICE** £114
- **CONTROLS** Speed, intensity, volume; chorus/TonePrint/vibrato toggle switch; bypass footswitch; USB and 9V power inputs, stereo inputs and outputs; internal true/buffered bypass and kill-dry switches
- **CONTACT** TC Electronic **www.tcelectronic.com**

Guitar & Bass VERDICT

+ Has all the classic Uni-Vibe tones
+ Great with heavy fuzz for Hendrix-style wig-outs
+ TonePrint tech is clever and easy to use

– Two or three switchable TonePrint slots would be nice
– Minor technical issues

Vintage vibe effects and more – potentially lots more, if you're prepared to experiment

8/10

KEY FEATURES

TC Electronic Helix Phaser

- **DESCRIPTION** Phaser pedal, made in Thailand
- **PRICE** £114
- **CONTROLS** Speed, depth, feedback, mix; vintage/TonePrint/smooth toggle switch; bypass footswitch; USB and 9V power inputs, stereo inputs and outputs; internal true/buffered bypass and kill-dry switches
- **CONTACT** TC Electronic **www.tcelectronic.com**

Guitar & Bass VERDICT

+ Good for adding dynamism to screaming solos
+ Separate feedback and mix knobs are handy
+ Truly immersive stereo effects

– All sounds are quite 'in your face'
– Some may find it a bit fiddly

A unit with all these features can't be anything other than versatile, but this one seems happiest in front of some hefty distortion

7/10

D'Angelico New York

IT'S ALL IN THE DETAILS.

THE LEXINGTON

D'Angelico Guitars' long history is defined by its commitment to quality. In addition to creating exceptional acoustic instruments, we've made sure that they are ready for your live performance by focusing on the small details that make a big difference.

- Onboard ease: The new Fishman INK-4 onboard preamp and tuner sounds incredibly clear and is easy to work in the dark.
- Guaranteed functionality: Grover Imperial Super-Rotomatic tuners for staying in tune longer.
- Premium tonewoods: Rosewood, spruce, sapele and mahogany for superior tone.
- Supreme resonance: FU-Tone brass bridge pins allow every note to cut through the mix.
- Subtle elegance: Mother-of-Pearl inlays, stairstep-style pick guard and bridge, and a Skyscraper truss rod cover all amplify your on-stage look.

WWW.DANGELICOGUITARS.COM

JHS Colour Box

Recording guitars direct divides opinion, but it's the only way to recreate some iconic tones. **HUW PRICE** opens up the Colour Box...

KEY FEATURES

JHS Colour Box

- **DESCRIPTION** DI box/ microphone preamp with Baxandall stack and high-pass filter, 18V power supply. Made in the USA
- **PRICE** £309
- **CONTROLS** master, pre-vol, step, hi pass, treble, middle, bass, hi pass, bypass footswitch, switches for HPF, -20dB attenuation pad and inst/XLR
- **DIMENSIONS** 93x120x67mm
- **CONTACT** Peach Guitars 01376 553016 **www.jhspedals.com**

The acronym 'DI' stands for 'direct inject', and during the 1980s sound engineers were often reluctant to record electric guitars any other way. Then, as now, most guitarists preferred the tone of their amps to the soulless fizz of period processors and ultra-clean DI boxes. Awkward questions were often asked, but they were invariably deflected with mutterings about 'separation' or 'keeping it dry'.

Even so, many iconic guitar sounds have been created by recording electric guitars directly into mixing desks, and the practice goes back to the 50s. The term 'direct' isn't strictly accurate, because you need an interface between a passive guitar and a microphone preamp to lower the source impedance.

Many classic preamps had discrete circuitry with high-quality transformers that could colour guitar tones in very pleasing ways. The equalisers sounded very 'musical', and enabled engineers to shape the sound precisely to ensure the guitar sat properly in the mix.

UK companies such as Neve manufactured some of the best preamps and equalisers. Today, vintage examples command astronomical prices – as do many repros and clones.

The JHS Colour Box is a combination DI box, preamp and equaliser with 100 per cent analogue circuitry, that is claimed to be 'true to the design and schematic of a vintage Neve'. It can also function like a conventional stompbox if you use the quarter-inch jack output.

A combo XLR/jack socket allows the Colour Box to be used as a microphone preamp once you move the slider switch from instrument to XLR. The Colour Box is equipped with a -20dB attenuation pad for the XLR input.

With colour-coded controls, the gain and volume knobs are all in the red zone. The preamp contains two gain stages, and the pre-vol control has no effect on the first stage. It sets the signal level getting into stage two, and you can think of it as a 'gain' control. Step is also a gain control, but it acts on both stages to increase the level in five increments. The instructions compare the role of master to that of an amp's master volume.

Even clean settings contain hints of harmonic overtones, and there's a softer attack to the transients

The three blue knobs are labelled treble, middle and bass. Operating a modified Baxandall tone stack, they're straight-ahead +/-17dB boost/cut controls with centre indents. This is different to the parametric equaliser designs associated with most Neve channel strips, because the frequencies are pre-selected. Having a switchable high-pass filter is always welcome on a mic preamp, and the Colour Box goes one better. The slope is pre-set at 6dB per octave, but hi pass sets the frequency point from 60Hz to 800Hz.

In use

There are numerous applications, but let's start with the DI aspect. These days, most digital audio interfaces with microphone inputs have high-impedance instrument inputs too, so I compared the Colour Box to a generic interface. It sounded radically different to my MOTU interface. Where the MOTU was cold, bland and excessively bright, the Colour Box sounded much fatter and smoother, with a more even and prolonged decay characteristic. Even clean settings contain hints of harmonic overtones, and there's a softer attack to the transients, not unlike mild compression.

The tone controls are very powerful and you can max the treble without encountering harshness. Rolling off the lows with the hi pass also helps to keep the guitar high in a mix without muddying up the bass end. It's just right for soul and funk rhythm parts, and can create lovely jazz tones with semis.

Overdrive is an option, so take time to discover how subtle clipping can warm up tone without sounding distorted. Pre-vol and step increase gain, but sound different. Pre-vol adds brightness, while step increases girth as you switch up through the five levels.

The clipping has a bright grittiness that's closer to *Revolution* by The Beatles than amplifier overdrive. Towards the upper limits of pre-vol, the sound stutters like a fuzzbox with

starved transistors, but mild overdrive adds a fantastic growl to DI bass.

In front of a valve amp, the Colour Box can be used as a clean boost or an overdrive with extensive equalisation options. Try attenuating the lows and highs while boosting the mids for a Tube Screamer-like push, or scoop the mids and boost bass and treble for a Marshall-type tone.

You can EQ the signal for a particular sound, then match the on/off volume levels for an amp or channel switching-type effect. Plugging into a cranked tweed, then dialling in a bright tone with scooped mids, I used the Colour Box as an attenuator to switch between blackface cleans and fat overdrive.

The jack output is a bit noisier than the XLR out, and it's a pity the XLR side is disabled in bypass mode. Keeping it active would allow you to send a pure signal to an amp while recording a clean direct signal for re-amping later.

As a mic preamp, the Colour Box is rich and characterful, adding thickness and edge if required. There's no phantom power, so it's valve, ribbon or moving-coil mics only; and loud sources are best because there's not a huge amount of clean gain. As an equaliser/distortion processor for dirtying up drums, vocals and so forth, it's very effective. This is where the range of the equaliser can be exploited fully, and the audio quality is such that there's no need to run a clean track in parallel with the processed track to retain clarity.

For guitar, I found the mild overdrive settings slightly too gritty. I preferred more distorted fuzz-like settings, but for me it would be a special-occasion sound. As a pedal, it has its uses, but it would see occasional use rather than taking up residence on my board.

The Colour Box is, first and foremost, a superb direct recording tool, and it delivers very impressive clean sounds with a wide tonal range. If that was the extent of it I'd still be impressed, so the other features are icing on the cake.

Guitar & Bass VERDICT

+ Very fine clean tones
+ Powerful but musical equaliser
+ Variable HPF
+ Low & high impedance in and out

- No 'link' facility
- Clipping sounds gritty
- Fixed-frequency EQ bands
- No ground lift or phase flip

The clipped tones might not please everybody, but the Colour Box is ideal for clean DI guitar and bass

8/10

Like this? Try these...

If you want to DI your guitar in the studio, without sacrificing its sonic characteristics, and have sophisticated tone-shaping controls at the touch of a footswitch, check out these preamp stompboxes.

Orange Bax Bangetaar £279

The Bax Bangeetar features a cabinet-simulator output, as well as Baxandall equalisation with parametric mids. It's a versatile tone-sculpting tool that's much more than an Orange amp in a stompbox.

Pettyjohn PreDrive

£256

The Pettyjohn Pre Drive is a studio-grade impedance-matching preamp with a transformer-coupled direct output, variable input impedance and high- and low-cut filters. It's great for use in the studio, preserving the original character of the guitar or bass you plug into it.

Hudson Electronics Broadcast £155

The Broadcast is a transformer-coupled germanium transistor preamp based on classic 60s consoles. The first 15 units featured a Mullard-made NOS black glass CV5712 germanium transistor.

J Rockett Audio Designs Boing Reverb

After trying complex studio-type reverb effects, you may long for a simple one-knob spring reverb. Will the Boing pan out for **HUW PRICE**?

KEY FEATURES

J Rockett Audio Designs Tour Series Boing Reverb

- **DESCRIPTION** Digital spring reverb emulator running on 9V centre negative power supply. Made in the USA
- **PRICE** £149
- **CONTROLS** True bypass footswitch, reverb level
- **CONTACT** Zoom UK 0843 2080 999 **www.rockettpedals.com**

J Rockett Audio Designs – maker of the superb Archer pedal, one of our favourite pedals released in recent years – feels there are lots of great reverb effects that emulate expensive studio 'verbs, but the sound tends to get lost in live mixes. Therefore, its new Boing pedal is styled after the spring reverbs that were integral to the sounds of the amps the designers grew up with. The Boing is certainly no complicated digital modelling pedal. Its circuit is based around the Accutronics PT2399 digital chip, and an analogue treble circuit has been added for spring-style splash and bounce, along with early reflections.

JRAD's mission in designing the Boing was "to give a non-reverb amp some atmosphere in a simplistic way that is easily controllable with one's foot." This is made possible thanks to the oversized reverb level control knob.

The Boing ships with a warning about the power supply. It's quite common to run digital pedals on 12- and 18-volt supplies these days, but the Boing is strictly a nine-volt centre negative pedal. If you run it at a higher voltage than that, you'll void your warranty.

In use

A reverb pedal such as the Boing is the type of effect you might leave switched on all the time, so it's essential that it doesn't suck tone from the dry signal as it passes through. To test this, I placed the Boing in a true-bypass loop with very short patch cables and turned the effect to minimum.

There was barely any difference in tone, whether the guitar signal was passing through the Boing or not.

As a spring reverb simulator, the Boing does a good job because it seems to gel with the core tone of the amp seamlessly

Maybe, just maybe, the Boing made the mids a bit fuller, but that could have been my imagination. However, the bypass test did show that the Boing's noise floor rises above the noise floor of the amp when the knob reaches 11 o'clock and beyond – and the hiss then becomes apparent.

The Boing was designed to remain fairly subtle through the first half of the control sweep, so there's not much reverb in the mix when the hiss begins. I also noticed that the overall tone of the guitar thins out gradually as the reverb effect is increased; but, again, you have to listen fairly hard to hear it.

As a spring reverb simulator, the Boing does a good job because it seems to gel with the core tone of the amp seamlessly, rather than sounding like a separate effect. Compared to the Catalinbread Topanga, it's darker and less three-dimensional, but even so it's a nice warm reverb that's not excessively bright. The medium-length decay feels about right for a Fender Deluxe-type 'verb and, roughly speaking, I'd put it at about four seconds.

Things stay fairly polite up to around two o'clock – when a splashy flutter echo effect joins the party if you play staccato notes. This means there's ample headroom before any springy weirdness is provoked. Upwards of about three o'clock, a hint of pitch modulation creeps in, that contributes a washy atmosphere to the surprisingly deep reverb.

Most players make do with the spring reverb that comes with their amps, and don't complain about any lack of dwell or tone controls. So if you like regular Fender-style reverb, you'll probably like the Boing, too. It does add some noise, but it's still quieter than the average amp reverb tank.

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE... Fender and Roland collaborated on the **Boss FRV-1 £99**, designed to emulate a 1963 Fender Spring Reverb. The **Catalinbread Topanga £159** is a DSP pedal based on the Fender 6G15 reverb unit. **TC Electronic's Arena £105** has a wide range of voices.

Guitar & Bass VERDICT

+ Plenty of headroom
+ Enjoyable spring-like sound
+ No special power requirements
+ Compact design

- Noticeable increase in the noise floor
- One (good) trick pony

Slightly noisy and light on features, but it's a fine-sounding spring reverb simulator nevertheless

8/10

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Finhol Accutronics Spring Reverb

Here's a no-nonsense solution for anyone who needs classic spring reverb sounds

PRICE £134 **CONTACT** www.thomann.de

Accutronics spring reverbs (formerly produced by the reverb division of The Hammond Organ Company and now by Accu Bell Sound Inc) have been at the heart of many classic guitar amps since the early 1960s. The electromechanical design gives a very particular sound, one that's associated with every genre of popular music from classic pop to country and rock. Unlike contemporary digital reverbs, that rely on the sampling of physical spaces, a metal coil spring is used to delay the signal and create an effect that sounds like room reflections. Accutronics units give a particularly musical character.

This Finhol unit contains an Accutronics spring and the necessary analogue circuitry. If you want to get a vintage sound from a contemporary amp, or are lucky enough to own a vintage non-reverb model, it's a practical solution.

This is definitely a no-nonsense device. You'll even need to plug an external footswitch in if you need an on/off option. It's large by the standard of most pedals, but it has to be to contain the mechanism. However, it's a lot smaller than a vintage external unit, such as the Colorsound Supa Reverb. The die-cast aluminium box is very solid and the single white control knob isn't going to confuse anyone; basically, it's a 'more' or 'less' knob. Maximum reverb time is three seconds. The unit comes with a 9V power supply.

In use

Adding the right amount of reverb to your sound is like adding the secret ingredient to your cooking – but what's the right amount? For added presence, you need just a hint. For a rich, watery 60s vibe, move the control further towards its maximum setting. The control itself is very responsive and smooth, so you can easily sculpt your guitar sound in relation to a band or a recorded mix. One of the advantages of spring reverb is that it's an emulation – so it doesn't clash with the room or hall reverbs you may be using to define vocal or drum space. Indeed, the right amount of spring can really put a guitar sound in its own acoustic niche. And this Finhol will give you all those Fleetwood Mac *Albatross* tones, too. However, as this is a relatively short spring (as they go), kicking the box doesn't give you that fake surf sound. **ML**

The right amount of spring can really put a guitar in its own acoustic niche

Guitar & Bass VERDICT

A straightforward, simple-to-use spring reverb that does what is says on the tin. The sound is classy, and smoother than many vintage units.

8/10

Finhol Blues Bass Board

Want some bass support for your gigs? This option won't drink the rider...

PRICE £270 **CONTACT** www.thomann.de

While organ players will be familiar with bass pedals, and acoustic guitarists may have encountered stompboxes that amplify a tapping foot, this Blues Bass Board is designed to give the solo player some basic bass support. And, as the name implies, it's designed primarily for use by 12-bar players.

The unit has a curiously classy retro hi-fi vibe to it, thanks to the use of solid oiled walnut for the three sensors and control unit. These are set onto a thick aluminium base plate. There's a notched rotary key selector, and once you set the tonic, this is assigned to the left-hand sensor.

The subdominant appears on the middle sensor and the dominant on the right. However, you will need to get your head around the fact that in Germany (and many other countries – including Poland, Denmark and Sweden), the chromatic scale is written using B for B flat and H for B! If the unit develops international popularity, perhaps Finhol will consider reprinting the top panel.

For a 21st-century device, the Blues Bass Board is notably old-school; there's no MIDI connectivity and the unit offers just three bass sounds, selectable with a mini-toggle switch: acoustic bass, standard electric bass and fretless bass. A second mini-toggle changes the play mode – and you can set this to either 1/4, 1/2 or 1/1 notes – in practice, this allows you to tap continuously and the bass will sound every beat, every second beat or on every fourth beat. As well as DC voltage, input and audio output, the unit also features a trigger output, which allows you to add a Finhol Auto Stomp Player pedal. This gives you various drum sounds and combinations, allowing you to slave a complete rhythm section to your foot.

In use

This is a pedal that takes a bit of getting used to! Standing or sitting on a fairly high stool feels the most comfortable. Once you've worked out how to do this without falling over, the sensors prove to be accurate and reliable and you can have a lot of fun.

However, there are some obvious limitations; the sensors aren't pressure sensitive, so you can't really nuance the performance – and while you can cover a widely varied repertoire with just three notes, lines are somewhat limited. Despite this, the sampled bass sounds are all rich, resonant and offer the appropriate timbre. While it's not aimed specifically at bass players, the unit does suggest it will bring to the table some intriguing possibilities for extending your technique. **ML**

Guitar & Bass VERDICT

The Blues Bass Board is a quirky, but likeable bit of kit that's designed for a very specific market – and as such the limitations aren't really an issue.

7/10

Electro-Harmonix Pitch Fork

A no-nonsense pitch shifter and harmoniser with bags of attitude

PRICE £97 **CONTACT** www.ehx.com

In a nutshell, the Pitch Fork is a polyphonic pitch shifter and harmony pedal that offers up to three complete octaves, plus a selection of closer intervals that can be set both above and below the dry note. Its trio of modes – above, below and dual, which combines the two – can be selected via the dedicated three-way microswitch, and the 11-way rotary pitch control selects the interval.

Another cool feature of the Pitch Fork is the Momentary function, which you can use for those times when you just need a quick blast of shift effect. It transforms the on/off switch's function to an unlatching operation, and you can drop the effect in and out as quickly as you need to.

Real-time whammy-style glissandos can be achieved by plugging an expression pedal into the dedicated input. The EHX version goes for around £55, and is probably the best option should you wish to get the very most out of the Pitch Fork, but the pedal is designed to be compatible with most expression units out there, including the offerings from Roland and others.

The Nano chassis shouldn't take up too much room on your board, and it comes supplied with a dedicated 9V power supply. You can also use it with a single PP3 battery, should you desire.

In use

As with using any pitch shifter, it's vital that your guitar is perfectly in tune before you start playing around with the Pitch Fork, but once we were tuned up and ready to go, we found the intervals to be satisfyingly accurate.

There's not a huge amount of tone sucking going on either and, whether you experiment with clean chords or single notes, the Pitch Fork keeps up effortlessly. Don't ignore the Detune setting either, offering – as it does – a passable impression of a Small Clone.

We were especially impressed by the performance of the low octaves, both cleanly and with a touch of drive. Intrusive fluttering is kept to a minimum and string bends are duplicated authentically.

Dual mode can transport you immediately to Steve Vai world, especially with the shift set to M3. Add in a touch of delay, pick some suitably major-flavoured chords and Passion & Warfare's *Ballerina 12/24* twirls away again.

Used with higher gain settings, full chords can mush up a tad, which we can live with, but single-note riffs are, again, pitched perfectly. Dropping high octaves into metal solos via Momentary mode can be very effective, while the double octave below rattles both the room and your fillings. **SB**

Guitar & Bass VERDICT

An easy-to-use pitch shifter that's full of customary EHX 'tude. Does exactly what it says on the box, and at a price we can stomach. Result!

8/10

Fredric Effects Foxrite MKII

Hand built in North London, the Foxrite is a Mosrite Fuzzrite clone with a twist

PRICE £95 **CONTACT** www.fredric.co.uk

The Mosrite Fuzzrite may not be an A-lister in the classic fuzz pantheon, so there are relatively few modern clones. Even so, it's a bona fide classic, and the Fredric Effects Foxrite is a modernised version of the later Fuzzrite, that was built with silicon transistors.

An extra boost stage has been added to increase the relatively low output level of the stock circuit, and operates on a slider switch labelled rite/rong. Rite mode corresponds with the original circuit, and rong is a commonly used variation on the Fuzzrite circuit, with the two gain stages of the circuit operating in series and the depth control acting more like a regular tone control.

The folded metal enclosure is custom made for Fredric Effects and powder coated with screen-printed artwork. Loaded onto a PCB, the components include a 2N3904 and two BC108A transistors, Cliff jacks, an Alpha footswitch and Alpha pots. The neat wiring inspires confidence.

In use

Unless you play mostly spaghetti western and surf music, the Foxrite may seem niche. It's about as far removed from the velvety sustain of a Big Muff as a fuzzbox can get. Even the manufacturer describes this as "a uniquely abrasive effect". Unlike Fuzz Face circuits, which most players seem to use with the fuzz maxed out, the Foxrite creates a wider range of tones and textures, but they are all characterised by a raspy and angry edge. In rite mode, the sound is never 'clean' as such, but at minimum depth the bass and lower-mid frequencies get through more or less unscathed, while the fuzz is confined to a metallic swirl in the upper frequencies. As depth is increased, the low end rolls off and fuzz increases before the low end regains its weight at two o'clock.

At higher depth settings, the tone brightens into a pseudo octave effect. The trick is to balance depth with volume, because higher volume levels bolster the lows, increase sustain and make the Foxrite sound smoother. Don't expect Hendrix-y blues or Santanta-like solo sustain; the Foxrite's percussive edge better lends itself to rhythm playing. It cleans up nicely, too, without any stuttering, and it adds a fascinating chiming fizz to picked arpeggios.

The rong setting adds great value, and makes the Foxrite more general-purpose without sacrificing sonic character. My preferred way to use this fuzz is into a clean amp with lashings of spring reverb and maybe a touch of trem or vibrato. However, it has an analogue synth-like quality that responds well to filtering and phasing. This is a circuit I know pretty well, having built my own Mosrite clone. I'm obliged to admit I prefer the Foxrite for its smoother and fatter tone. Recommended. **HP**

Guitar & Bass VERDICT

A sonically accurate and well-built recreation of the silicon Mosrite Fuzzrite, that packs an extra boost feature, too

8/10

DELUXE ELECTRIC MISTRESS

From flowing iridescent tapestries of phosphorescent sound to Mach 1 jet flanging, the definitive analog flanger is now in a die-cast package and with true bypass! An EHX exclusive: Filter Matrix mode stops the sweep for freeze-frame tones and tricks. Uses a 9V battery or standard 9.6DC-200 power supply. **Power supply included.**

HOLY GRAIL NEO

We took the Holy Grail's lush Hall and time-less Spring reverbs and added the studio-grade plate reverb from the Holy Grail Max. The Neo is our most compact pedal to feature EHX's luscious plate reverberation. **Power supply included.**

NANO 360 LOOPER

A compact, affordable looper with 360 seconds of recording time and 11 storable loops for maximum control and flexibility. Its user-friendly layout makes recording, overdubbing, undo-redo and erasing quick and easy. High quality audio and unlimited overdubbing with no sound degradation. Equipped with a silent, momentary footswitch. **Power supply included.**

BAD STONE PHASE SHIFTER

A reincarnation of the highly sought after pedal now in a nano package and faithful to the original circuit design. The Bad Stone was the first phaser to employ variable feedback and features six stages of phase shifting plus a manual mode that lets you freeze the phase. It's full on phaser bliss! **9V battery included.**

GOOD VIBES

This hypnotically haunting effect takes you on a trip back to the '60s. Like the original Uni-Vibe®, it uses photocells to create chorus and vibrato with a warm, undulating, liquid groove for a sound and response that's true to the classic design. Boosted power rails provide 21st century definition and headroom, and an expression pedal input puts free-form control for both speed and intensity at your feet. Very groovy! **Power supply included.**

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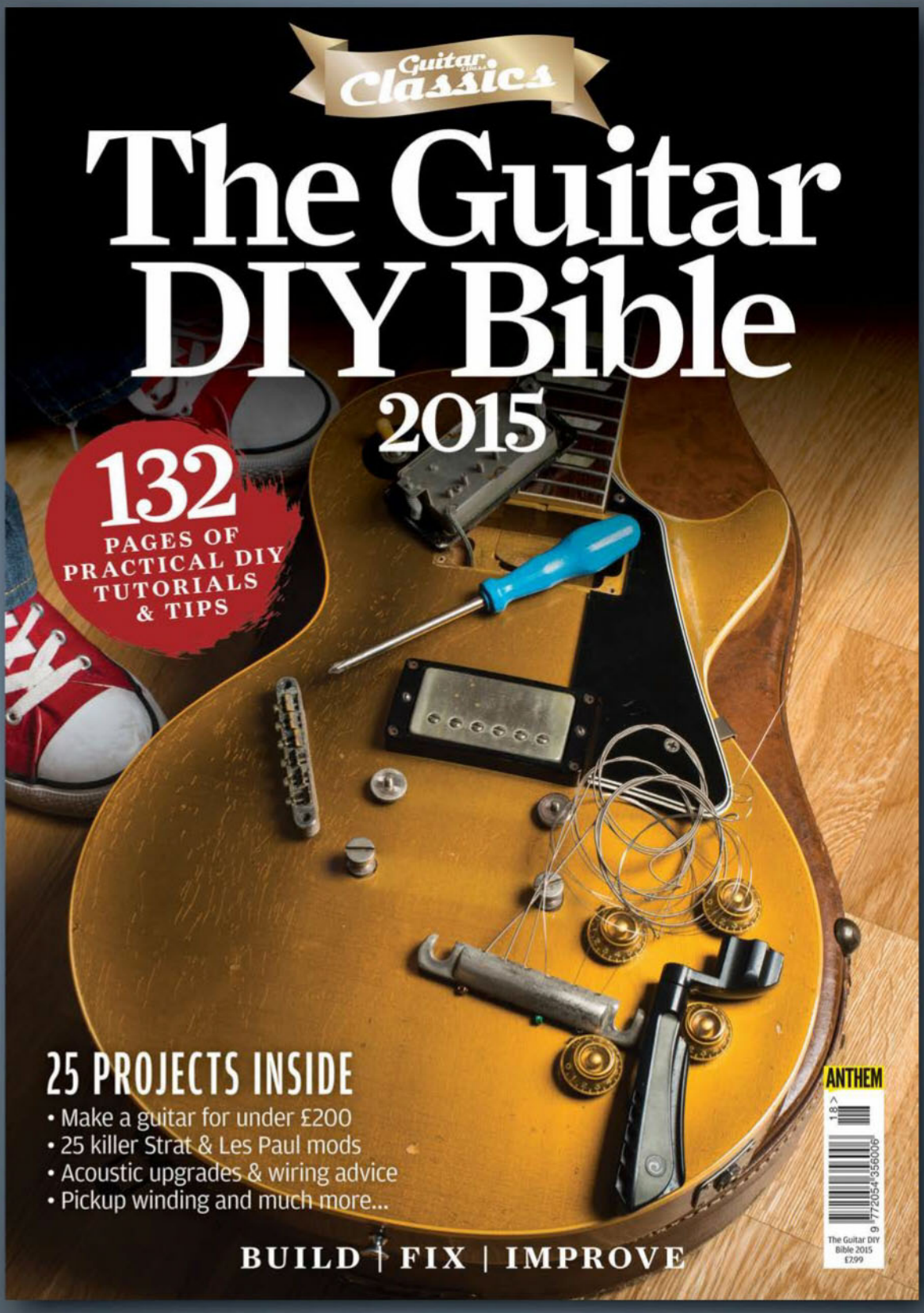

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Six of the best

Arm yourself with these bass essentials before you hit the gigging circuit. It's a jungle out there...

Hercules GS415B Stand

PRICE £39.99 **CONTACT** herculesstands.co.uk

In the debate between A-frame or tripod instrument stands, we'd always plump for the latter, and Hercules' GS415B is a splendid example. It features an auto-grab system, the mechanism of which is triggered by the insertion of your bass' headstock. A pair of arms contract, contact points cushioned by 'specially formulated' foam gently retain your bass, and a pair of catches click across to prevent it falling forwards and out. Your bass' body leans on the two larger of the three tripod legs, cushioned by foam pads, and the whole thing folds down to about a third of the size of a mic stand.

Fender Metro Bass Gig Bag

PRICE £48 **CONTACT** www.fender.com

Whilst you can easily pay considerably more or less for a bag, Fender's Metro offering is a keenly priced carrier made from luggage-grade polyester and worth checking out. It satisfies the two main criteria that justify a gig bag's existence: sufficient internal padding to cushion your baby, in this instance 25mm high-grade foam, and padded rucksack-style straps that make wearing it over your shoulders stress-free. It zips up in smooth, unhindered fashion, it's water-resistant (not completely waterproof), and storage provision numbers three well-sized outer pockets with plenty of space to stash the items below.

Snark SN-10 Tuner

PRICE £59.99 **CONTACT** www.jhs.co.uk

It's essential, especially for the clumsier members of the brotherhood of low, to have a robust, reliable on-stage tuner. The term robust means we sidestep the clip-on headstock option and head straight to Snark's excellent SN-10 chromatic foot pedal tuning panacea. Design-wise, its art deco, silver-dome vibe is appealing, die-cast metal construction guarantees it'll take a kicking, and the read-out screen is big, with a multi-colour, easy-to-read display. It responds quickly to your input, can be calibrated to various altered tunings, while engaging via silver stomp switch also mutes the Snark's output for unobtrusive use in the live environment.

Fender's Metro is a keenly priced carrier made from luggage-grade polyester and worth checking out

Comfort Strapp Pro Bass Series Strap

PRICE £30 **CONTACT** www.comfortstrapp.com

With most modern four-string basses weighing over 4kg and the proliferation of even heavier five- and six-strings, your strap has to have some form of comfort provision, and Comfort Strapp's Pro Bass Series is just about the best out there. You get three adjustable lengths (short, long and extra long) with non-stretchy neoprene padding that's 10mm thick and 85mm wide at the shoulder for excellent cushioning support without added bounciness. It's neatly stitched for security and durability, and each leather end features two slots for strap buttons/locks, which simply refuse to widen or become compromised in any way. This is quite simply a must-have.

Planet Waves DP002B Bass Pro Winder

PRICE £10.30 **CONTACT** www.planetwaves.com

Unlikely as this may be, if you ping a string at a gig, speed of string change is of the essence – and if you factor in possible issues relating to strain on the wrist from manual changes, you'll rapidly see why Planet Waves' Bass Pro Winder string winder is such an essential piece of kit. Made from tough plastic composite and looking like an old football rattle, you also get hardened steel clippers at the far end, with an additional plastic arm for snipping duties. The slotted head that fits over tuners is designed to be used with both modern T-shaped and traditional cloverleaf buttons... which is nice.

Xotic RC Bass Booster

PRICE £155 **CONTACT** www.bassdirect.co.uk

The identity of the one 'essential' pedal in a bass player's armoury is debatable, but we'd argue that for even those busy gigsters unenamoured by effects, some form of tone fixer is a damn good idea, with Xotic's RC Bass Booster being one of the best. A level booster with two-band EQ, ruggedly hand-made in the USA, it's a half-standard stomp size belter that simply makes your bass louder without colouring, via volume and gain dials, with the option to add/subtract 15dB of bass or treble. For setting song-specific EQs, fixing hollow stage issues, kicking in a different colour or giving some active juice to a passive bass, the RC is a great option that's easy and intuitive to use.

A level booster with two-band EQ, ruggedly hand-made in the USA, it simply makes your bass louder without colouring

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Vintage PRIVATE COLLECTION

HARLEY'S STREET

Martin Harley is a highly-acclaimed lap steel slide player and collector of Weissenborn-style guitars. **LARS MULLEN** pays him a vist...

After years of touring the UK and abroad as a solo artist and fronting The Martin Harley Band, Cardiff-born Martin Harley has built himself a reputation as one of the UK's finest lap steel slide players and singer-songwriters. Harley is a great lover of Weissenborn guitars, and has an enviable collection. He has five albums under his belt, has played all over the world and even has a place in the Guinness World Records. His music is beloved of a diverse range of followers, from blues purists to members of the UK surfing community.

"Ah yes, I love surfing and all the vibe that goes with it, but I can't do it," he laughs. "I'm the world's worst, but I am trying to improve in-between playing solo and band work. I enjoy both concepts, the band has the harmonies and I get to play about with my amps and pedals, although a lot of the lap steel technique I have with my thumb gets lost. I do enjoy solo work, where I'm free to hit combinations of licks with space to improvise, and to take the ball and run and feed off the audience.

"I had an interest in early blues music as a youngster, slide followed after being transfixed by Ry Cooder playing the soundtrack from the 1984 film *Paris, Texas*. I was just a 17-year-old lad who loved the blues, but was sucked into wanting to be in a guitar gang, play the gigs and impress the girls. Guns N' Roses were a big influence and I was banging out seven bells on a Les Paul Classic 1960 reissue, as a Slash wannabe. I still have that very guitar here. I used a Les Paul all over my *Mojo Fix* album, released in 2013 and recorded in Texas, even though it was Delta blues-influenced, using Weissenborn acoustic lap steel guitars."

"I was just a 17-year-old, I was sucked into wanting to be in a guitar gang, play the gigs and impress the girls"

It wasn't until on one of Martin's many 'adventures of the road' that he finally put a slide on his finger, however, as he recalls: "My road trips are becoming a talking point. I decided to travel around the dusty back roads of Australia in the mid-90s, living out of a beaten-up old station wagon with a couple of guitars. The heat in the vehicle was so intense, they both had warped necks in no time. So I reverted to open tuning and used them to >

Above, **Martin with a parlour-sized resonator built by Texan manufacturer Republic**
Opposite page, **Sunburst Framus archtop (left), Framus 5/51 Studio archtop**

The Gibson

GUILD

develop my own style. When I wasn't surfing, I was playing out the back of the car in some completely uninhabited places.

"By the late 90s, I was well into original resonators and acoustics, and heard one of the best places to find them was in the Mission District of San Francisco. So off I went again, but upgraded to a hired Pontiac Firebird Convertible, driving east from LA into the desert and back up to San Francisco. Sure enough, I found this 60s Gibson LG-3, which is a great fingerpicker and one that I leave in the kitchen when I'm waiting for the shepherd's pie to cook, and this L-1 archtop built in the Kalamazoo factory between 1915 and 1920.

"I was heading back through Death Valley, California, the hottest area of North America, without the slightest thought of the L-1 cooking in the boot. The glue around the body had started to melt; luckily, the repair job back home proved to be worth every penny.

"The little Framus archtop is from the late 50s. I believe it's a 5/51 Studio. It was gathering dust in the corner of a guitar builder's workshop. I've not recorded with it yet, there's quite a brashy sound here, so I'm waiting for the right song, really.

"I have several big-bodied acoustics here, which include a couple of Guild J30s from around '84. The black one appeared when my father arrived home from a trip to the USA. He bought it with the idea of me teaching him to play. Well, I failed, and eventually through gritted teeth he sold it to me. It became my first choice for live work for years, until it was smashed by Virgin Atlantic. I performed at the airline's own festival in Barbados, then it got smashed on the way home. I had it repaired, but it's never been quite the same.

"I took part in what has been recognised as the world's highest gig, playing 21,000 feet up"

"I bought this OOO-size Blueridge as a back-up to the black Guild. I wanted a good fingerstyle model that wouldn't break the bank, would play and sound great, and also handle extreme temperatures, as I had something special in mind for this one... a climbing trip.

"I took part in what has been recognised by Guinness World Records as the world's highest gig. It's not good on the fingers playing 21,000 feet up mount Kala Patthar in the Himalayas, but it was worth it as it helped raise money for a kids' home in Nepal."

While many world-famous explorers and adventures work together as a team, it would seem that when working alone on such missions, >

Opposite page, top, left to right, **60s Gibson LG-3 (left), L-1 archtop; L-1 archtop headstock** *Bottom, left to right,* **Japanese Epiphone Sheraton (left), 1960 reissue Les Paul Classic; black and natural Guild J30s** *This page, left to right,* **OOO-size Blueridge; Koa Andreas Cuntz Weissenborn-style guitar (left), Kona Style 1 Weissenborn, Weissenborn-style guitar built by Cornish luthier Kif Wood; solidbody hybrid Weissenborn built by Andreas Cuntz (left), Chandler lap steel guitar**

Martin has the ability to pen some deep and meaningful songs, as he explains.

"I must admit, I've undertaken a few challenges and returned with a book full of songs," he says. "For example, in 2010 I embarked on a solo 27-date tour over 31 days, from Gateshead in the Far North East of England to St Austell in the far South West, with all my gear, including my Blueridge BR-41 Baby and all my daily essential needs... loaded on a bicycle.

"It was a feat to say the least, pedalling over 1,200 miles and gigging nearly every night, but I'm OK if I get beer in the evening and tea during the day – tea is the elixir of life for me. The guitar gained a war wound, as you can see. It's all documented on my website."

"It was a feat to say the least, pedalling over 1,200 miles and gigging nearly every night"

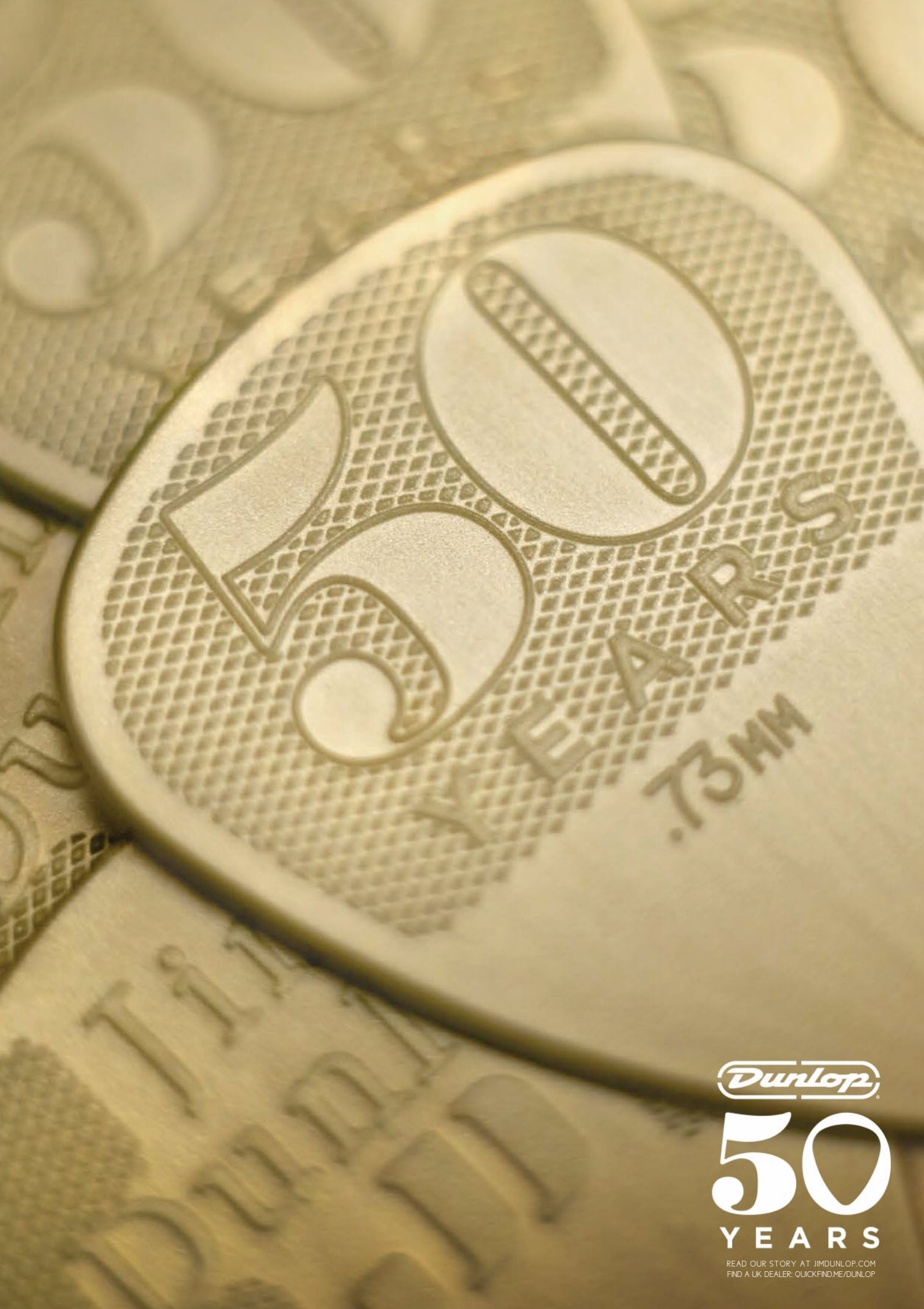
Over the years, Weissenborn lap steel guitars have played a major role in the Martin Harley sound, as he acknowledges: "Oh without doubt, you can hear them all over my new album, out late summer 2015, called *Live At Southern Ground*, recorded in Nashville, Tennessee, featuring Daniel Kimbro on upright bass. I used this Kona Style 1 Weissenborn, which dates from the 1920s, which I bought after some heated haggling from Norman's Rare Guitars in LA.

"My highly prized and probably most played instrument of all time, that's appeared on all my albums, and certainly my main squeeze for solo slide guitar live, is this model built in the Weissenborn style by the German luthier Andreas Cuntz, using the finest koa, and it's a killer. I don't really have a favourite pickup, but this guitar, fitted with an LR Baggs M1 Active, is the perfect combination, it's incredible.

"Here's another one built in the Weissenborn style by Cornish luthier Kif Wood, who can make guitars out of driftwood if need be; he built this one from an old rosewood table. He's also worked out a very innovative way of producing a contact pickup, which sounds extremely good. I was having difficulty in a full-band situation with the Weissenborn models, especially with monitoring, so I asked Andreas Cuntz to build me this solidbodied hybrid-version, again in lap steel format.

"It's loaded with a pair of humbuckers with wider-spaced magnets to line up with the strings, a five-way switch and phase control. It still retains some acoustic properties, as it's chambered, and this time an added acoustic Piezo under the bridge blends really well. The output is massive, and sounds >

Above, left to right, **1930s, solid mahogany Radiotone lap steel; Radiotone headstock; Radiotone volume control that goes up to 150; Alvarez Artist acoustic (left), Andreas Cuntz CWG23**



Dunlop

50

YEARS

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amazing through my Peavey Classic 30 combos, which I've used for the last 12 years."

Stacks of well-worn vintage suitcases are a fitting backdrop for many of Martin's guitars.

"Yeah, I just love the old concept here, and this mid-30s, solid mahogany Radiotone lap steel is ideally placed. It was actually made by the Oahu company, so maybe it was sold under licence. I'm not sure, but I love it and use it a lot live. The pickup is wrapped up in material, which moves about in the body. I've no idea what make it is, but it's very loud. I'm reluctant to improve anything – I'm thinking 'if it ain't broke, leave it alone'. I like the fact that the volume control goes past 10 – way up to 150.

"There's probably a special rung in hell reserved for people who cut up images of Jesus to make fretboard markers, but this Alvarez Artist acoustic didn't have any. I got fed up struggling to see where I was playing in lap steel position at a soundcheck, and a couple of postcards of him were all I had. This guitar was originally a 12-string, and one of the guitars that warped on my trek around Australia. By now, it's apparent to you that I travel a lot under various means of transport, so a guitar that's relatively unaffected by temperature, is lightweight and indestructible, is essential.

"So far, my parlour-size resonator, built by Republic in Austin, Texas, USA, and fitted with a Lace pickup, has proved invaluable. I love this guitar, it's certainly expanded my bottle neck playing, using open G and D tuning.

"I have a family of car boot fanatics, who just keep arriving with guitars! Here's a £10 Hofner 522 they found, which sounds very authentic with a slide. I personally feel that within the style of slide, it's not that necessary to own very expensive guitars. I think the argument with a lot of these older, cheaper guitars, like the Hofner 522, is that we are familiar with that sound because a lot of the early blues players were playing budget student guitars. For me, every guitar has a song in it, regardless of the price."

"I feel that within the style of slide, it's not that necessary to own very expensive guitars"

For more info on Martin Harley, visit: www.martinharley.com

Above, left to right, **Martin enjoying a cuppa with his collection; nylon-string acoustic of unknown origin (left), Hagstrom Futurama bass; East German Otwin acoustic, Hofner 522 bought for £10**

Want to see your guitars, amps or effects featured in the pages of *Guitar & Bass*? Email the details and a few taster pics to **guitarandbass@anthem-publishing.com** to be considered for inclusion in a future issue.

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SID BISHOP

During his tenure at the Top Gear store on London's iconic Denmark Street, Sid dealt with multitudes of famous musicians. Having been around, in his own words "before vintage guitars were invented", Sid got up close and personal with thousands of drool-worthy instruments. Luckily for us, he's willing to share his stories and wisdom about all things guitar-related.

EARNING A CRUST

Only a tiny percentage of bands reach the promised land of making a full-time living from playing the music they love – and it's a long, rocky road to get there, as **SID BISHOP** recalls...

By 1967, I believed I had achieved a reasonable level of competence as a guitarist, but had still played only in some local bands made up mostly of my old schoolmates. It appeared that my musical career was going nowhere fast, and I was eager for that next crucial step. That step, of course, was to join a professional band and attempt to earn a living doing what I enjoyed – and was convinced I was born to do. People who follow this road inevitably have vastly differing experiences, but I can only pass on to you my own.

My first problem was to find the band, and thus it was that I responded to an ad in *Melody Maker*, a publication which is sadly no more. Said ad was for a working London-based band seeking a guitar player, and I thought it was well worth a try. What could possibly go wrong?

I picked up my guitar and amp, made my way from Brixton to the East End, and located the address where I had been told the band lived. It was a down-at-heel terraced house just a short walk from Whitechapel High Street, and looked like the set from a Jack The Ripper movie. I viewed the place with a vague sense of foreboding, wondering what I'd let myself in for. It was undeniably a fixer-upper; several windows were broken, causing the house to be damp and very cold, and there was odorous evidence of many cats all over the rickety stairs. Each floor had been sub-divided into small flats or single rooms, and provided housing for a large colony of hippies. A heavy fug of cannabis smoke hung over the house, and each intake of breath was getting me slightly more stoned. Hopefully, I wouldn't be expected to drive or operate heavy machinery! After enquiring who'd put the ad in the paper, I made contact with a couple of these colourful characters, and following amiable greetings and introductions we all made our way to the musty basement. I did my audition, all pretty easy stuff from my standpoint, mostly bluesy-rock numbers using familiar chords and progressions, and to my surprise I was taken on board that very afternoon. The band were The Social Deviants, although within a few months the 'Social' was discontinued, and henceforth the band became merely The Deviants. Those of you of a certain age might be familiar with the name.

Singer Mick Farren's vision was for it to be much more than a mere rock band. His model, likely based on the Grateful Dead's house in San Francisco, was that of a Bohemian collective, advocating its own anarchic political agenda, and a counter-culture voice made more widely public via writings in such outlets as *OZ* and *International Times*. The music was a part of all this, and was to be a crucial element in conveying that voice. "Make war with guitars, not bombs" was one oft-quoted slogan. Not being an especially politically aware person, the only aspect of all of this that I felt related to me was the band itself, so I ignored all the politics, concentrating instead on getting the music right. Within a few short weeks, I was schlepping up and down the M1 in a Ford Transit playing gig after gig, appearing at an outdoor festival in Holland

Not everybody in Sid's politically aware late-60s bohemian band would have been in favour of 'selling out' and playing big money-spinning shows such as this...

to a crowd of 30,000, and beginning recording the band's first album. This was the life!

We played a number of free 'agitprop' gigs, but however altruistic the band's motives may have been, we also had to eat, pay rent and travelling costs, and purchase and maintain our equipment, thus we also performed at venues that paid money. The late Mr Farren had very sincere ideals, but his nebulous dreams of a truly egalitarian society would stretch only so far. We function within this society, and in my view – for better or worse – we inevitably have to become an integral part of it to survive. The alternative is unthinkable. As Mick himself said in later years, if we'd remained faithful to those founding principles, we'd all have ended up living in cardboard boxes under Charing Cross station. Being conservative (with a small 'c'), I didn't slot into Mick's socialist ethos especially well, and I certainly had no intention of moving in to the band's large new communal flat on Shaftesbury Avenue. Being 'bohemian' was not for me, and, despite its several undeniable attractions, I favoured a more structured existence. I was quite content to continue living in Brixton with my then wife, who was soon to bear a child, and earning steady money as a professional musician. I felt this commune, which in practice what it was, to be a step too far – and this refusal set me apart from the rest of the band for the remainder of my tenure.

"If we'd remained faithful to those founding principles we'd have all ended up living in cardboard boxes"

By 1969, despite all of those gigs and, by then, two albums in the shops, my income from the band had been progressively diminishing, due mainly to increasing expenditure, ill-considered contractual decisions, and never-to-be-seen record royalties. On a bad week, there was no money at all. Furthermore, I found the constant gigging exhausting, and after nearly two years I had to confront the fact that the end of my road was in sight. I didn't possess the stamina of a Keith Richards or Pete Townshend, and still don't, which is why I ended up working in a guitar shop. If the band had been commercially successful, however, I might well have viewed the situation somewhat differently, but it was obvious to all that The Deviants were never likely to be commercial 'pop star' material, and any suggestion of an appearance on *Top Of The Pops* would have caused Mick to become apoplectic. He would have certainly seen this as a total 'sell-out'.

The point of all this is that joining any band will be exciting, and may, with luck, have a successful long-term outcome, but can also be akin to jumping headlong into a dark hole, and you might find yourself in an unfamiliar environment that is not necessarily comfortable, let alone financially rewarding. That was certainly true concerning The Deviants, and lessons learned, I moved on, though I wouldn't have missed it for the world. Never again would a band be my sole source of income.

ARE OLD ONES THE BEST?

Hundreds of vintage Strats have passed through **PHIL HARRIS'** hands over the years, but on what would the teenage Phil spend his paper round money if he was in the market today?

PHIL HARRIS

This industry legend has been a guitar fanatic since childhood, quickly acquiring a Les Paul obsession that has never left him. During his long professional playing career, he provided lead guitar for the likes of Edgar Broughton (as well as, briefly, Thin Lizzy), before starting a guitar hire company specialising in vintage gear. A long-time consultant for the likes of Sotheby's and Christie's, Phil's encyclopedic knowledge of classic gear (most of which he's played and/or owned at some point) is beyond compare.

Recently, while in conversation with an old friend and fellow vintage devotee, an earth-shattering question was raised: If our teenage selves had access to the kind of vintage-spec Fender and Gibson models currently available, would we ever have hankered after original vintage guitars?

It's true that even from the beginning I was always quite attached to the idea of owning an original 'Burst, but the fact is, even back in the day, I never took much notice of pre- and post-CBS when it came to Fenders. I simply couldn't afford a new Stratocaster in 1968, so I ended up with a '63 model finished in Fiesta Red. How mad is that from the perspective of the present day?

But my outlook changed, and by the mid-70s to early 80s if a Fender wasn't pre-CBS it was basically used to hold a door open. I've probably had something like 800-900 original Strats pass through my hands over the years. I've been playing old Strats for so many years I'm tied to the original specification. I just can't help it, a guitar has to be totally dimensionally vintage-correct for me to enjoy it. In the 70s and 80s, we didn't have new Fenders that were accurate copies – even in the 90s, it was debatable.

By the mid 90s-2000s many friends of mine realised those old guitars they were gigging in the pub every week were becoming very valuable. It was around the time the Seymour Duncan pre-CBS repro single coils had appeared and Squier and Japanese Fender guitars could be picked up very cheaply. What many of them did was cash in on their original guitars and buy a new, cheap imported Strat and fit these new repro parts. And they were very happy with the results.

I never went that far, but I did something similar with my American 1982 '57 reissue Strat. You would have thought this guitar was made by anybody but Fender, as it's so far from the original dimensions. It's at best an average Strat of its era, and the pickups were horrible, so I had one of the first sets of Monty's reproduction Strat pickups put in it.

At the time, an extremely famous record producer came to me to hire a Strat. Bear in mind he'd been been hiring pre-CBS Strats off me for nigh-on 30 years. I gave him the '82 and asked him if he would pass it around Sarm Studios, where he was working. The top producers at Sarm are not tied to vintage spec or the kudos of a guitar, but they do have some of the best ears on the planet. When the guitar came back a week later, there was a note in the case saying, "Thank you Phil. This is the best Strat we've ever heard."

So that begs a question: are you prepared to spend £1,500 on a vintage reissue Strat or £5,000 on a refin with half the bits missing, when there's every chance that a guitar such as my '82 would bury it for tone?

My friend Derek has this amazing '54 reissue that he's had for eight years or so now. The specification is identical; I played it and it did everything that one of my original Strats could have done – and perhaps a little bit more because the pickups had a bit more zing. If I was playing a gig tomorrow and I had to choose between a '54 Strat and Derek's guitar, I'd take his. If you gave me £25-30K to go and buy a '54 Strat, I'd book the longest holiday in the Seychelles known to man and buy a guitar like Derek's instead. Perhaps if Gibson and Fender hadn't messed about with their original specs, the investor market may never have emerged in the first place.

And so, returning to my original question, when Jimi Hendrix performed at Woodstock he was playing a Strat that was just a year old. He never asked about the spec, he just made it the best-sounding Strat on the planet. Would my teenage self have looked further than a guitar that was half the price of Jimi's, but arguably a better instrument? I sincerely doubt that I would.

Given the choice, these days Phil would opt for a Custom Shop replica rather than this original 1955 example

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THE 1975

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Brian Ray SIR PAUL MCCARTNEY

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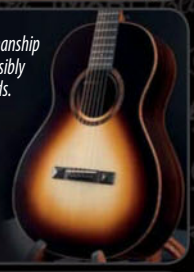

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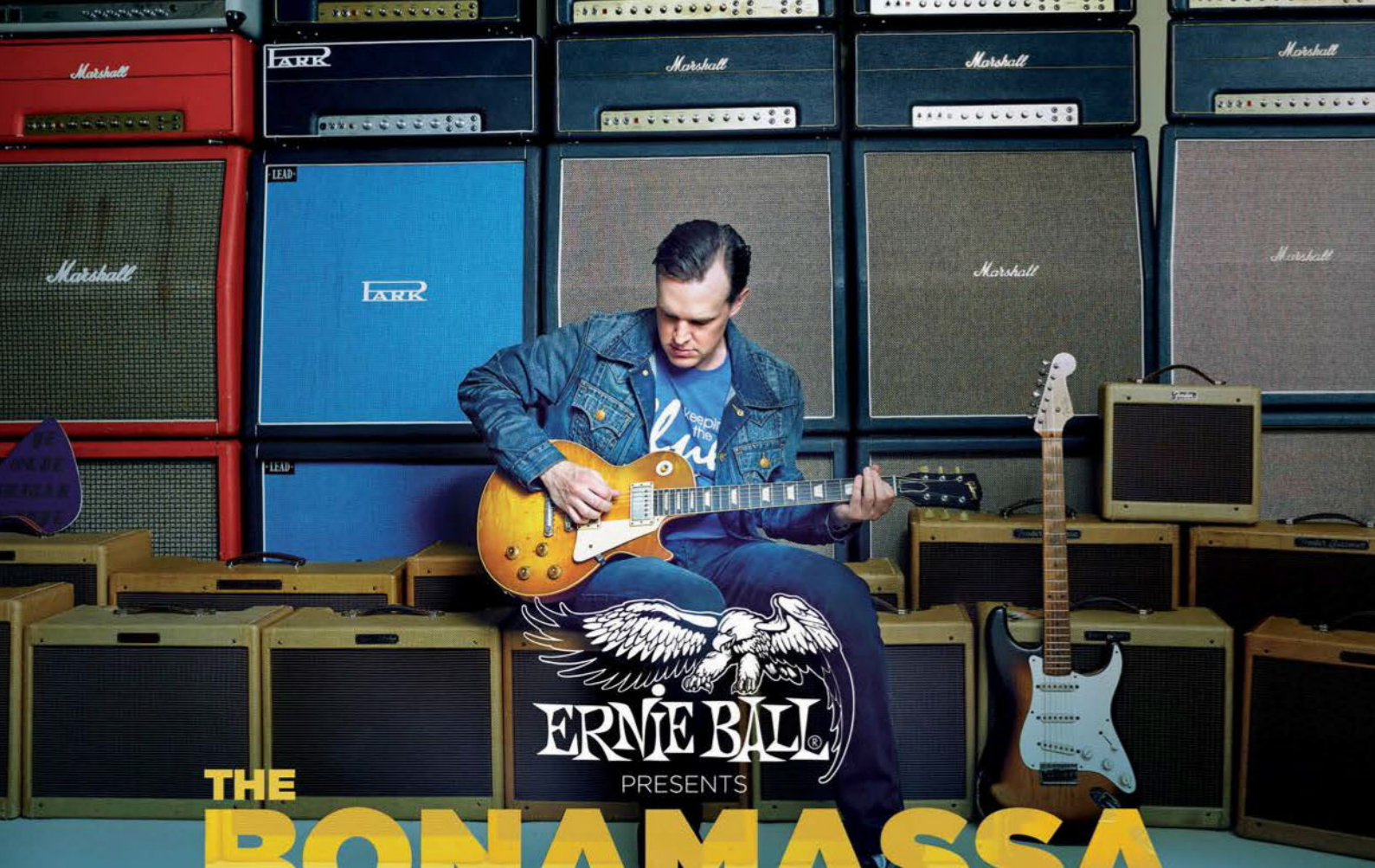

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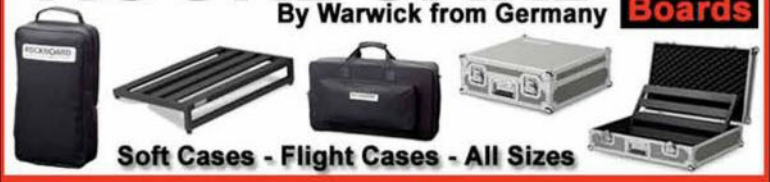

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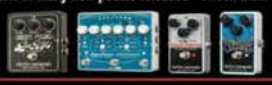

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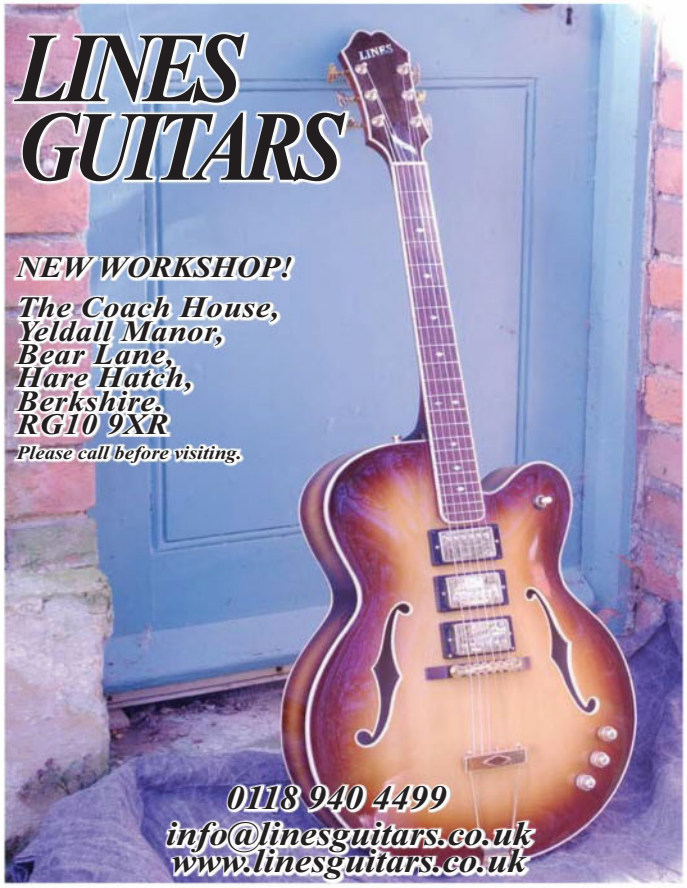

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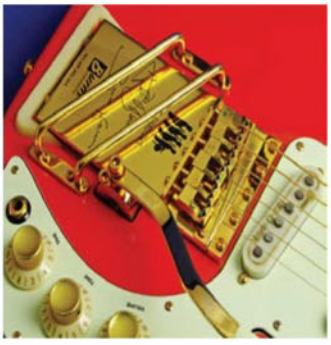

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How to... record bass

Following on from last month's tutorial on recording electric guitars, this time **JOHN PICKFORD** turns his attention to the bass...

Getting a good bass sound is integral to the success of any piece of recorded music – whether it's deep, dub bass in reggae or the bright, punchy slap tones of funk – and all manner of other genres. No matter what style you're recording, the bass guitar should provide a solid foundation for your track and – along with other elements of the rhythm section – define its groove. There are several ways of recording bass, the most popular being DI – directly injecting the instrument to your recorder; there's also mic'ing an amp/cab and, as many engineers like to do, combining a blend of DI and microphone signals (see p118).

One thing to consider is whether the bass is to be recorded simultaneously with other elements of the track, such as drums and guitars, or performed as an overdub. If you're recording other instruments in the same room as an amplified bass, it's likely that there will be a certain amount of spill. This is fine as long as the leakage isn't going to adversely affect any future processing during the mixing stage, and some bands thrive on creating a live groove in the studio. However, adopting the DI approach can both avoid spill and open up options later on in the recording process.

Some bass guitars have active pickups, meaning that their output is high enough to be plugged directly into your mixer or interface. However, most basses feature passive pick-ups, necessitating the use of a DI box to boost the low-level signal. Although bass recorded through a DI can sound tight, dry and clean, it can also lack some of the body and punch that you get from a great-sounding bass cab.

However, when recording a band live in the studio, using a bass DI not only avoids unwanted spill, it also allows a good drum take (for example) to be saved if the bassist makes a mistake. And if the bass part is played perfectly, but the sound isn't quite right, the clean DI signal can later be fed through an amplifier and mic'd up; this technique is called re-amping (see opposite). Nowadays, there are many outboard recording

Getty Images

Although bass recorded through a DI can sound tight, dry and clean, it can also lack some of the body you get from a cab

channels or channel strips that feature excellent DI inputs. Some of these are based upon vintage console designs, and most feature both EQ and dynamics control, enabling you to achieve superb results without the need for amplification.

Mic'ing the cab

Often, though, to achieve the very best bass tones, only the sound of a mic'd-up bass cab will do. The sound of a good bass amplifier, particularly if it's a valve model, is hard to emulate with DI techniques alone. Most engineers favour either dynamic mics with a strong low-end response, or a large-diaphragm condenser. Ribbon designs can sound great on bass, but are more delicate than other types and don't like to be placed close to sources producing high SPLs.

Microphones designed for bass drums – such as the classic AKG D112 – usually work well on bass guitar, as they generally have a pronounced low-end boost that is flattering to bass signals, and can handle very high SPLs. Don't worry if you don't have one of these, though, as most general-purpose mics, such as the Shure SM57 will do a reasonably good job if positioned correctly – see the More On Mic Placement box below-right.

In later years, The Beatles' engineer Geoff Emerick often recorded Paul McCartney's bass as an overdub, using an AKG C12 set to figure 8 (bi-directional), placing the mic around four or five feet from the bass cab.

For most recording situations, however, moving the mic between 5 and 18 inches from the speaker should give you all the tonal options you could ever want – unless you're after a particularly roomy sound. Whereabouts along the plane of the speaker the mic is aimed will also determine the final tone. Pointing the mic at the centre of the speaker cone will give you the punchiest sound, while moving along to the edge of the cone will result in smoother, warmer tones.

If you are using a mic with a cardioid polar pattern, bear in mind that the closer you place it, the more bottom-end will be heard, due to the proximity effect. This can be used to your advantage if you only have a vocal mic (such as a Shure SM58) at your disposal, as these mics tend to have a rolled-off low-end response. >

MORE ON MIC PLACEMENT

Unlike electric guitar amps, that can give good-sounding results with a mic almost touching the speaker cloth, bass cabs benefit from having a greater distance between the speaker and the mic. Around five inches is usually the minimum distance to achieve a decent tone, but longer distances can produce excellent results, too – if the recording situation permits.

RE-AMPING A DIRECT BASS SIGNAL

1 Recording bass via DI during a group tracking session can both help avoid excessive bleed onto other mics and allow greater flexibility when mixing. However, bass DI alone lacks the body and drive produced by a decent amplifier. Once the DI'd bass has been recorded, the signal can be sent to a bass amp/cab and re-recorded in isolation. You will then have two channels of clean bass with no spill from drums or other instruments.

2 The best device to use is a dedicated re-amping box, which can be obtained reasonably inexpensively. These work like a DI box in reverse, matching the recorded DI bass signal to a level that is suitable for the amplifier. Indeed, a passive DI box can be used in reverse. However, a re-amping box will offer a more flexible and hassle-free approach to matching both impedance and signal levels.

3 Simply take the DI bass signal from your recorder and plug into the input of the re-amp box. Connect a microphone to the box and mic up the amp/cab to your satisfaction. The sound of the amplified bass can now be overdubbed onto a separate track. Of course, if you are using plug-in amplifier mods instead of the real thing, the DI sound can be treated in your DAW without the need for a re-amping box or bass amplifier.

BASS AMP AND DI SIGNALS COMBINED

1 Recording bass both direct and through a bass amp can produce some great results. You get the clean, clear and present sound of the instrument from the direct signal, combined with the warm low end and rich harmonics produced by the speaker cabinet – particularly if you're recording using a valve amp. Be aware, though, that unless the bass guitar has active pickups, you'll need to use a DI (direct injection) box to match impedances and boost the low-level signal from the instrument.

2 Plug the bass into the instrument (jack) input of the DI box and take a feed from the box into the input of the amp. Use the XLR output on the DI box to connect to your mixer or interface. Once the bass cabinet has been suitably mic'd, you will have two channels of bass. As the signal from the mic enters the recorder a couple of milliseconds later than the DI signal, the sound may become vague when combined, due to phase issues.

3 To solidify your bass sound, play both channels together and send the DI signal to a digital delay. Dial in the delay (around 2ms is usually about right) until the bass sound snaps into focus. A continuously variable delay is best for this job, so that you can hear precisely when the sound becomes solid and punchy. Alternatively, simply move the DI signal within your digital recorder so that the waveforms match and are not out of phase.

Compression techniques

Bass guitars have a wide dynamic range and it's almost always necessary to use some compression. The amount required will depend on the style and technique of the player, but as a rule of thumb, some gentle compression at the recording stage, with a heavier squeeze during mixdown, is a sensible starting point. Try using a 4:1 ratio, and then if the bass part is still too wildly dynamic, try a higher ratio when mixing.

Some bass playing styles, such as slap-bass, feature an occasional very loud note that can be tamed by using a much higher ratio of 10:1 or more to limit the peaks. Using extremely fast attack and decay times is not a good idea when recording bass as the initial transients will be lost and the compressor will struggle with the complex waveforms of bass signals. Instead, set the attack time so that the plucking of the string can be heard – around 50ms should do it – and then set the release time to around 250ms or, if your compressor has an auto release setting, use that.

Bass guitars have a wide dynamic range, and it's almost always necessary to use some compression

Before using a compressor, it's worth making sure that the basic tone of the bass is correct as a compressor will emphasise the main tonal characteristic. Therefore, it's a good idea to make any drastic EQ adjustments before compressing. If your bass sound needs fattening-up, a boost at around 80Hz often helps. However, experiment with upper-bass and low-mid frequencies (100Hz – 400Hz) to help the bass part bed-in with other elements of the mix such as the kick drum. As bass guitars don't produce much in the way of usable high-frequency information, rolling-off the upper frequencies from around 5kHz will allow space for the treble elements of the track. Similarly, when mixing, the bass guitar will have more room to breathe if a high-pass-filter is applied to other instruments and voices that don't require a lot of low-end energy.

Using effects with bass isn't nearly as common as with electric guitars but can produce distinctive results. Reverbs and delays should be used with caution as they can smear the bass part and rob the part of punch and drive. Some distortion effects can give bass parts a gritty edge, however the extreme distortion caused by fuzzboxes can reduce the low-end impact of the sound. During the 80s, it was fashionable to use a chorus effect, often with fretless basses, which were in vogue during that era. Try a positioning a foam mute down at the bridge for a thumping 60s flavour.

So, there are several different approaches, and only your own personal circumstances and preferences can dictate which method works best for you. As always, take time to experiment – and trust your ears!

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All about... echo

Whether it's rockabilly slapback, psychedelic feedback or crystalline delays, echo effects are fundamental to the sound of electric guitar. **HUW PRICE** tries not to repeat himself...

The term 'echo' is often used interchangeably with 'reverb'. Although related, they're really quite different. An echo is a distinct repeat of the original sound – like a handclap bouncing off a canyon wall. Reverb is comprised of multiple echoes that are so close together they sound continuous.

Since echo occurs in the natural world, it's hardly surprising it was amongst the first 'effects' engineers attempted to simulate electronically. There are several methods to achieve echo effects, but regardless of the technology, the parameters are usually the same and may include any combination of delay time, sustain/feedback, wet/dry, modulation and record level.

Reel echo

To create an echo, it's necessary to record the sound then play it back after the event. Reel-to-reel tape machines were the first high-fidelity recording devices, so they were used to create the earliest echo effects.

Tape recorders usually have two or more heads. One head 'prints' the sound to tape and another head plays it back. These heads are physically separate, so if you monitor the recorded sound rather than the audio input, there will be a delay before playback occurs.

Tape speed and the gap between the heads determine the delay time. Most tape recorders run at 7.5 or 15 IPS (inches per second), so if the gap between the print and playback heads is one inch and a machine is running at 15 IPS, the resulting delay is one fifteenth of a second – approximately 66 milliseconds. Switch to 7.5 IPS and you get 133 milliseconds – perfect for rockabilly slapback.

For additional repeats, some of the playback signal must be sent back to the tape machine input. Turning the return beyond a certain point will induce runaway feedback, which takes us from the 50s into the BBC Radiophonic Workshop of Delia Derbyshire, the psychedelic 60s of Pink Floyd and beyond.

Today, we guitarists have the luxury of choosing the best type of echo for any given application

When the space between the heads is fixed, the only way to adjust delay time is to vary the speed of the tape machine, and before long engineers were building varispeed control units. Les Paul was one of the trailblazers for tape-based studio echo and pitch effects.

There are limits to delay times achievable with a single tape machine because audio quality deteriorates as tape speed decreases. With the tape travelling between two tape machines, one can print the sound and the other play it back.

Print and playback heads placed 15 inches apart, with tape running at 15 IPS, produces a one-second delay time. Double the distance and you get a two-second delay. Studios often had long 'echo shelves' for this very purpose. The tape can also be looped, and exponents of this include Terry Riley, Brian Eno and Robert Fripp.

Tapes and drums

An Illinois music store owner called Ray Butts built a guitar amplifier with a built-in echo effect running on a short loop of tape. By 1953, he was selling EchoSonic amps to big-name players. You can hear the EchoSonic on Chet Atkins' *Mr. Sandman* and Elvis' *Mystery Train*.

By 1958, standalone echo machines were becoming commonplace. The WEM Copicat allowed the selection of various delay times by activating different playback heads. Used in combination, multiple heads can produce complex echo effects. The Maestro Echoplex had a very long tape loop in a replaceable cassette with single moveable playback head.

Early machines were valve, but many prefer the sound of later solid-state tape echo machines –

especially those with variable tape speed. Other notables include the Klemt Echolette, the Dynacord Echochord and Roland's RE series.

Other vintage devices used rotating magnetic drums rather than tape. David Gilmour made extensive use of the Binson Echorec and Hank Marvin used a Meazzi Echomatic.

Passing the bucket

Tape echos need regular maintenance, and eventually they wear out. Today, we can appreciate their quirky characteristics because other options are readily available, but by the mid 1970s most guitarists were ready for something different.

Bucket brigade devices (BBDs) are integrated circuits containing numerous transistor/capacitor cells. Transferring packets of charge from one cell to another takes time, which delays the signal, and the BBD output is mixed with the dry signal to create an echo effect.

BBD-based delay units were small, and needed no maintenance. However, they were noisy, lacked fidelity and delay times were very limited. Some classic BBD delays include Boss' DM series, the Electro-Harmonix Memory Man and the Ibanez AD9, and many remain popular with players.

On the rack

BBDs also provided the basis for countless flanger, chorus and phaser pedals, but for echo they were essentially a stop gap until full-on digital delays became more affordable.

It helps to think of digital media in terms of storage rather than recording. An audio signal is converted into digital information, where it can be stored in a buffer until required and converted into the analogue domain for playback.

At first, digital delays were expensive rackmount effects seen only in high-end recording studios. Like analogue synthesisers, they had switches and control knobs for every parameter – and no presets. The most exciting aspects of these units were unprecedented user control, clear sound quality and long delay times.

LED panels showed the delay time in milliseconds. Most engineers carried delay charts in their personal organisers to match delays to the tempo of any song that had been recorded to a click track. From simple quarter beats to dotted triplets or 3/16s, setting delay effects had become easy and exact. Previously, engineers had to rely on their ears to set delay times.

Effects loops became commonplace on guitar amplifiers, because rack effects worked at line level. Early examples seen in period guitar racks included the TC 2290, Roland SDE-3000 and the glorious but notorious AMS DMX15-80S.

By the mid 1980s, digital delay pedals were starting to appear on the market – most notably the Boss DD-2. Having such accurate control over timing enabled guitarists to build up rhythmic patterns of great complexity and sonic interest from the simplest of ideas. Edge from U2 is perhaps the most well known exponent of this playing style.

New models

Consider how echo effects have evolved. The initial drivers were extended delay times and improved audio quality, then for a while players were more concerned with convenience and reliability. Digital technology eventually provided users with outstanding audio quality, reliability and controllability, but we have come full circle.

Today, we guitarists have the luxury of choosing the best type of echo for any given application. Our own individual definition of 'best' is more subjective than ever and lo-fi audio, distortion and erratic pitch often win out. The use of cutting-edge modeling technology to replicate the sounds and peculiarities of yesteryear is one of the great ironies of our era.

Yet it's also the most fun, and we can thank Line 6 for blowing guitar echo effects wide open with the DL4. Now everybody's at it, with other digital players including Strymon, Catalinbread and Cicognani.

BUYER'S GUIDE

Have you always fancied a tape echo? Perhaps you're a BBD enthusiast or maybe you never really escaped the 80s. Whatever your style or taste, there is an echo effect that's perfect for you. Here are four of the finest...

FULLTONE SSTE £729

Fulltone isn't exactly coy about its latest tape echo unit being based on the Echoplex EP-3 – albeit with several improvements. It's a third of the size, noise levels are lower, dry and wet levels are individually controllable and there's a true bypass option. The SSTE is also a cheaper option than Fultone's valve TTE for any Jimmy Page or John Martyn fan.

GURUS ECHOSEX 2 £269

Designed and manufactured in Italy, this Binson Echorec-inspired pedal combines a PT2399 processor with a 12AX7 valve. The goal was to recreate the sound quality and the quirky characteristics of the original in a stompbox format, along with authentic styling and extended delay times. Early reports are encouraging, but will David Gilmour be buying one?

ELECTRO-HARMONIX DELUXE MEMORY MAN £204

The original is one of the most highly regarded of the bucket brigade delays. Famous users include The Edge and Andy Summers. It's currently unclear whether the reissue features BBD technology or a modern chip with filtering. Even so, it does all the usual delay tricks with up to 550ms delay and chorus and vibrato.

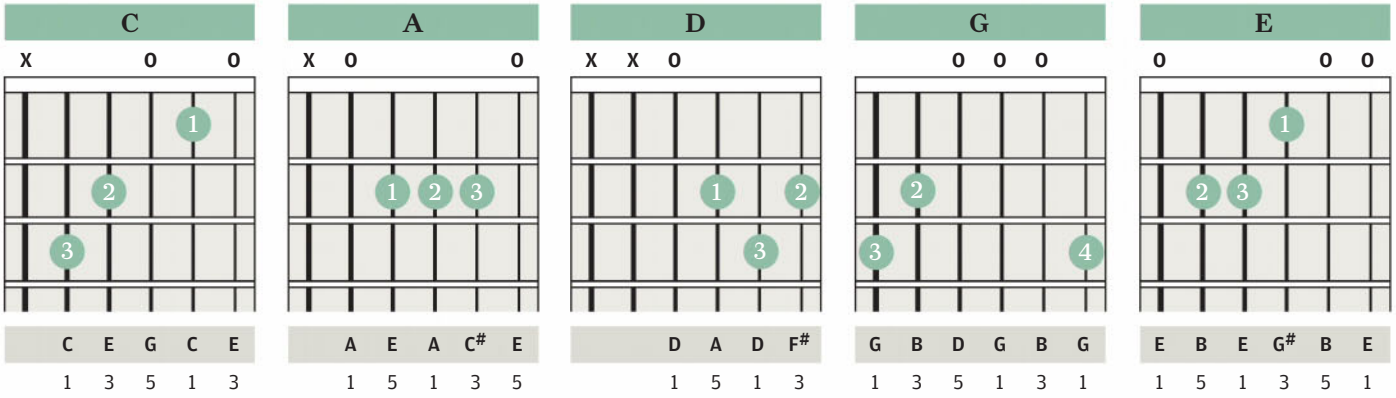
TC ELECTRONIC ND-1 £165

Described as a compact evolution of 80s favourite the 2290, this stereo pedal has nine user presets and six delay types - dynamic, reverse, ping-pong, pan and slapback. Modulation, tap tempo and audio tapping can be used with all delay types. TC started out making guitar pedals, and it's good to see the company back in the game.

Chord Clinic

Welcome to the first instalment of a new series in which tutor **ROD FOGG** will help expand your chord vocabulary. No matter what your level of ability, there's always room to improve. First, let's go right back to basics...

Open-string chords



Open-string chords

Above are the five basic major chord shapes. We call these open-string chords because they are down at the low end of the guitar, and make use of open strings whenever possible. In music, terms such as up and down, or high and low, refer to pitch. So the low end of the guitar is where the low notes happen, near the nut. The high end of the guitar is the dusty bit up near the pickups or soundhole. The high E, or first, string is the thinnest one that makes the highest sound, and the low E, or sixth, string is the thickest one that makes the lowest sound. When describing tunings, the convention is to go the other way, from the lowest-sounding string to the highest. That makes the open strings on the guitar E A D G B E, low to high.

Let's take a detailed look at the first diagram, C major. The six vertical lines are the guitar strings going from thickest to thinnest. The horizontal lines are the nut at the top, then the frets crossing the strings working their way down. Above the diagram, we get the name of the chord as it would appear in sheet music or a chord chart. The capital letter C means "C major" – mostly, we don't bother to say the word "major". Then we have an X above the nut on the thickest string, which tells you not to play the low E string. The two zeros tell you to let the G and high E strings ring open.

The circular blob with number one in the middle represents your first finger stopping the B string on the first fret. The number two is your second finger on the second fret, D string, and your third finger is over on the third fret on the A string. Use the tip of your third finger to mute the low E string and you'll be able to strum away without hearing the open E droning away beneath your lovely C major chord. Chords sound most powerful and focused when the root note (that's the name-note) is in the bass.

At the bottom of the chord diagram, the row of letters are the names of the notes you are playing, so C major consists of C E G C E. In fact you need only the notes C, E and G to make C major, and this means there are dozens of possible shapes for C major on the guitar. The way that the notes of a chord are arranged is called a voicing. This voicing mixes doubled notes with the bright tone of open strings, resulting in a jangly sound.

Finally, at the bottom we have a row of numbers, and this is where we get a bit theoretical. These numbers show the relationship of the notes in the chord to the major scale built on its root. So C, E and G are notes one, three and five of the C major scale and would be called root, third and fifth. Sometimes, you will see the letter R for root instead of the number one. Any chord consisting only of the root, third and fifth is called a triad.

Open-string minor chords

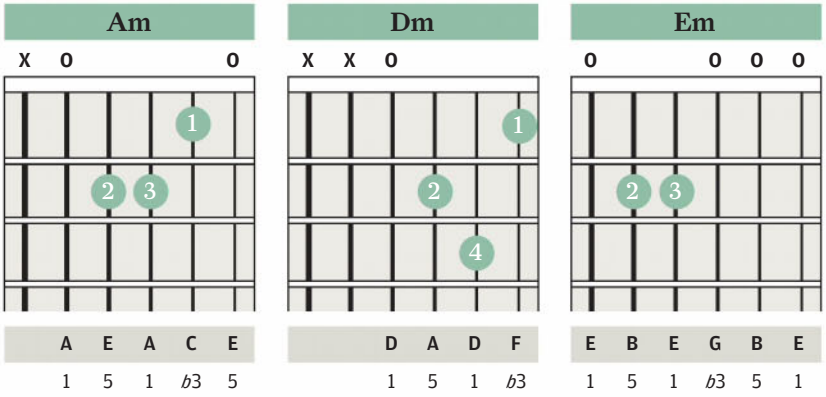
There are just three open-string minor chords. These are also built from the root, third and fifth, but in a minor chord the third is flattened – or lowered – one semitone, which is the same as one fret. So we have a ♭3 or "flat third". Compare E, A and D minor to the major chords of the same name, and in each case you'll find one note that has been lowered by one fret. We could also say that a major chord has a major third – which is four semitones, and a minor chord has a minor third, which is three semitones. In fact, major and minor chords are named after what kind of third they have. The fifth doesn't change. In chord charts, we use a small m next to a capital letter for a minor chord, but when talking about minor chords we always use the full name – A minor, E minor, etc.

Work your way through the chords in figures 1 and 2 in turn, and try playing the notes one at a time – as an arpeggio – from low to high. All the required notes should be sounding cleanly with no buzzes or rattles. Are the open strings sounding, too? Even quite experienced players are surprised to discover that sometimes they don't fret common chords cleanly. Can you name the notes of the chord as you play them? When you come to play the A, Am, D and Dm chords let your fret-hand thumb creep over the top of the neck to mute the low E. D is just a four-note chord – it's not the end of the world if you hit the open A string when strumming D or D minor, but ideally the open D should be your bass note.

Take a closer look at the G chord; you might be surprised to find it fingered here using fingers two, three and four. The idea is to make it easier to get from G to C, as it places fingers two and three very close to their destination when moving to C. These two chords are closely related and with this fingering you'll be able to switch between them very quickly. If you can already, it's OK to wear a smug expression for a moment.

Armed with these eight chords and a capo, it is possible to play a very large number of songs – possibly the majority of songs ever written. Commit the shapes to memory (remember their names, too – the major chords spell the word "CAGED"). If you've never tried bashing (I mean strumming) your way through a chord chart and you need help getting started, have a look at *Brown Eyed Girl* by Van Morrison, *For the First Time* by The Script or *Good Riddance (Time Of Your Life)* by Green Day, or search the web for the song of your own choice. Strum the right-hand patterns that you hear in the original and practise the chord changes back and forth until you can keep up.

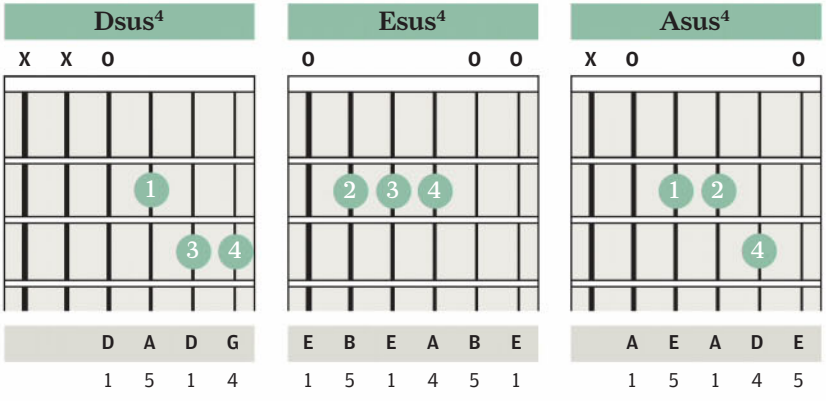
Open-string minor chords



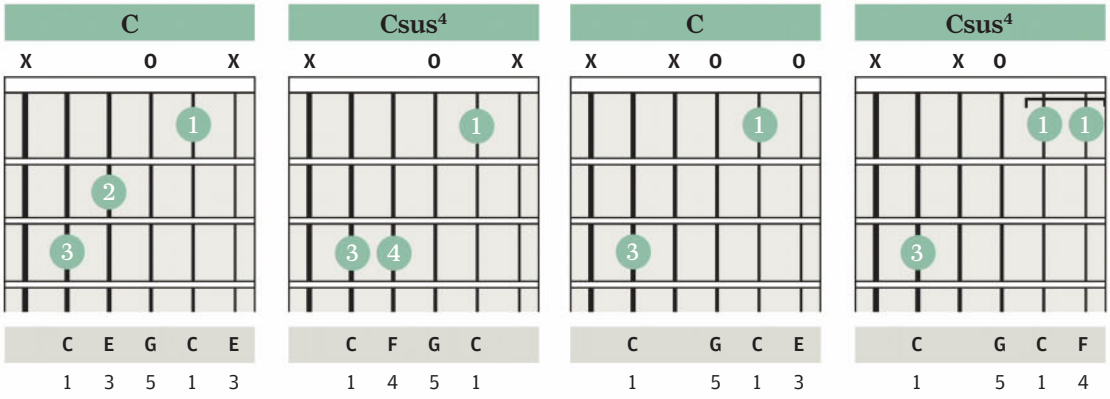
Suspended fourth chords

If you grab the third of a major chord and make it go one semitone higher, it will become a fourth. Chords consisting of a root, fourth and fifth are known as sus4, short for "suspended fourth". The interesting thing to note about suspended fourth chords is that they seem to want to progress back to the normal major chord. A lot of songwriters seem to have discovered the Dsus4 to D chord sequence at some point, and it's used a lot in popular music of many genres. So, with the chord boxes on the right, we make it possible to do progressions from Esus4 to E and Asus4 to A. Give it a try.

Suspended fourth chords



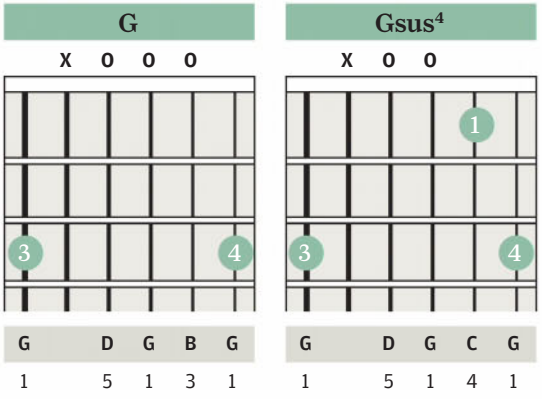
Major to suspended fourth moves



Major to sus4 moves

In chord shapes where the third is doubled, such as C and G, we need to have a rethink – for now, we want to avoid having the third and fourth in the same chord. In the first two shapes, the high E string is muted with the underside of the index finger and the pinky can be used to produce the Csus4 chord. The next two shapes mute the D string and then add the sus4 on the top string. The final two shapes modify the G chord by muting the A string with the underside of the third finger – making it possible to produce a sus4 chord by dropping the first finger on the B string.

Sus4 chords have a restless and unresolved quality, which can add interest to chord sequences. Try making up some of your own using just sus4 chords, or alternatively try following a sus4 chord with its major chord. Mix in the occasional minor chord and see what you come up with. Next time, we'll continue to add notes to our open-string chord shapes and on the way sort out the difference between a sus2 and an added nine. Enjoy!



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Fretbuzz

Your letters. This month: Replacement amp tubes, in praise of Les Pauls and your power supply problems solved...

LETTER OF THE MONTH

Those were the Days

Paul Day's article on vintage early British electrics was fascinating and an inspired choice of material. It not only gave a chronological structure to a period I remember well, it also added clarity by filling in gaps of my knowledge where information had not filtered down through my rural teenage years to darkest Hampshire. Though the pioneers of American rock 'n' roll had come and gone by the mid-50s, it was skiffle and Lonnie Donegan that inspired my generation to pick up guitars and learn the basic chords. From there, it was simply a matter of adding a pickup to any old crummy acoustic guitar.

Little wonder that my generation spent every waking minute with our ears pressed against the loudspeaker of a dreadful record player, our noses stuck against the window of our local guitar shop window while we lusted over the latest guitar bling, and our blistered fingers wrapped around the neck of our unforgiving guitar. Like many others, I could not afford any of the commercially available guitars Paul mentioned, so I made one in 1961. Though not very good, even by the standards of the day, it did get played, and I still have it.

These were the drivers that kickstarted the British beat boom. And to the horror of our parents' generation, it could be heard in village halls, youth clubs and pubs throughout the land. This was our first taste of independence as we got to grips with a heady combination of music, girls and guitars.

So here's a suggestion. Why not investigate the period in more depth and get Paul Day to do a series of follow-up articles that pushes the basic concept further and undertakes a more detailed look at the period, the music trends, the bands and their equipment?

Harry Ellis, via email

***G&B** Thanks for your letter, Harry. In these days of music streaming services and cheap, high-quality offshore instrument manufacturing, it's easy to forget what life was like for guitarists of a certain age. Fear not, you certainly haven't heard the last of Mr Day; his words will feature in the mag again soon!*

Guitar LETTER OF THE MONTH

WRITTEN A LETTER OF THE MONTH?

Then you are the lucky winner of an Orange Crush PiX mini amp, featuring switchable overdrive, a built-in tuner and the Brit amp legend's timeless cosmetics. Visit **www.orangeamps.com** for the full spec.

Pedal power

I wonder if you can help put an end to my power-related pedalboard woes... I'm running a Boss TU-2 chromatic tuner, EHX Hot Tubes Nano, Seymour Duncan Pickup Booster, Pro-Co RAT, Strymon BigSky, Line 6 DL4 and an EHX Super Pulsar tremolo on my board, with everything plugged into a standard extension lead.

It's far from an ideal situation, and I'm terrified of one of the power supplies, or even the extension itself, failing mid-gig and plunging me from sonic nirvana to a puny, raw clean sound, like in Bill Bailey's famous The Edge sketch – or even worse, total silence. However, several of these pedals have different-sized input

Simon Cotton's pedalboard

sockets, the DL4 takes AC, while the rest are DC, and I believe it needs to draw 1200mA, which is more than some power supplies can dish out. The BigSky has different requirements from the others, too! Can you recommend something that can handle all of these pedals, without breaking the bank – I want to save that for buying more pedals!

Simon Cotton, via email

***G&B** You are certainly not the only player in this predicament, Simon, and sadly there's not really a cheap solution! We recommend checking out the Voodoo Lab Pedal Power Mondo. It'll power almost anything quietly and reliably, including high-current digital effects.*

New tubes

I just got your *2015 Guitar Amp Bible,* and I have enjoyed it greatly. Your article on vacuum tubes was excellent. However, I have some questions. I have A Fender Super Champ X2. Could you please recommend some good choices for replacement tubes for it? Since I live in an apartment, this amp will never be cranked. I think I would rather go with something that will last a good while. Also, I have the Vox ToneLab. Could you please recommend a replacement tube for it?

Eric Nelson, via email

***G&B** Huw Price replies: Are you happy with the sound? If the answer is no, it might be worth having a tech check the bias setting of the power valves before you install new ones.*

Fender is known to run the X2 power tubes fairly cold, and setting the bias is an easy procedure because a 1-Ohm cathode resistor is wired into the circuit, along with a bias trim pot. Bias it warmer and you'll get earlier power amp overdrive and softer dynamics. You may even decide that the factory power valves sound fine after all.

You'll have to check the bias anyway if you install a new pair of power valves. Simply replacing power valves in an amp that isn't cathode biased, without checking the bias is not a smart option. If you do decide to go ahead, a pair of JJs will run to £24 and a pair of new old stock Phillips will be £50. You need to request a matched pair and you may have to pay a 'matching fee'.

On the other hand, preamp valves, such as the 12AX7 in your X2, can be swapped like for like and you can just go with the one that sounds best. Buy from a reputable dealer like Watford Valves and they will test for low microphony. Prices may be cheaper on eBay, but you'll be taking a risk.

If the valve fails or sounds ringy and rattly within a short space of time, a dealer should replace it. Which brand depends on your budget. You could spend £35 or more on a new old stock RCA or Phillips. I've had good results with Harma valves, and prices range from £12 to about £18.

As I recall, the Vox ToneLab uses a 12AX7 as a pseudo power valve to drive a 'virtual transformer', and is configured in class A or AB, depending on the model selected. In this case, both sides of the dual-triode 12AX7 must be matched, and you should specify this when ordering from a dealer.

Chris Campbell's 1965 Burns Split-Sonic

Best of British

I subscribe to your magazine and was very interested in your articles on early British electrics, as I own one myself. It is a 1965 Burns Split-Sonic. I have owned the guitar since 1966, when I was 16. I still have the guitar and it is in near-mint condition. The quaility of materials, construction, finish, playability and sounds surpass several expensive American guitars I have owned over the years.

Chris Campbell, Stirling, Scotland

G&B *That's a lovely guitar, Chris. If anyone else has an early British electric in their collection, we'd love to see some pictures.*

Hum cancelling

On my pedalboard, I have three Boss pedals: a Super Octave, an overdrive and a tremolo. Plus my Catalinbread Echorec. If I take the Echorec off the pedalboard, leaving the other three, there is no hum through the amp, no matter what power supply I use. With the Echorec, whether independently or on the pedalboard, there is a hum through the amp if I use any other power supply that I have, but if I use either Boss PSA (I have two), there is no hum through the amp – whether the Echorec is used independently or on the pedlaboard with the three Boss pedals. So, I suppose the solution, if you have a Catalinbread Echorec, is to use it with the Boss PSA – they seem to be the perfect match (I think the PSA is probably one of the best you can buy, anyway).

I also play pedal steel, and I was saddened to hear of the passing recently – at the age of 78 – of the great Buddy Emmons. What a wonderful player he was – when it comes to pedal steel, the best.

Paul Galvin, Lancashire

G&B *Thanks for the PSU advice, Paul. Buddy Emmons was indeed a special talent and the legacy he leaves behind is considerable. A feature on pedal steel is in the pipeline...*

Paul the best

Firstly, I want to say I am really enjoying the new expanded format of *Guitar & Bass* – the previous 'thinner' format always left me wanting more! I was just reading your welcome page in this month's issue [Vol 26, No 11], and I have to say that in over three decades playing rock guitar, the Les Paul has to be the greatest rock guitar ever made.

I would like to dispel two criticisms of LPs: one, they are not as versatile as Strats, and two, they are too heavy. As regards versatility, whilst a Strat has five pickup settings, I only find myself ever using three: bridge, bridge/middle (for quacky tones) and neck – for solos. This is no more than a Les Paul, which for me has a great middle position that can be used quite often.

As regards weight, no need to go for chambered or semi models. The answer is to go for the Custom Shop models, that weigh around 8.5lbs. And if you can't afford Custom Shop prices, check out Tokai...

Mark, via email

G&B *Thanks Mark, you've done nothing there to help our terrible case of Gibson Custom Les Paul GAS. If you like Les Pauls, particularly vintage models, you are in for a real treat next issue...*

HAVE YOUR SAY! Write to us by snail mail, *Guitar & Bass, Anthem Publishing, Suite 6 Piccadilly House, London Road, Bath BA1 6PL* or email **guitarandbass@anthem-publishing.com.** Alternatively get in touch via social media on Facebook or Twitter.

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NEXT ISSUE

Guitar & Bass

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

Paul McCartney

The former Beatle made his name with a Violin Bass, but what about his electric guitar playing? We look at the six-string work that lit up the Fab Four's finest albums...

LES PAUL GOLDTOPS

Two stunning 1950s originals under the microscope in our vintage bench test

INTERVIEWS

Vintage Trouble • Jimmy LaFave
John Etheridge • Willie Watson

REVIEWS

Patrick James Eggle
Epiphone acoustics
Yerasov amps
Sandberg basses
Eventide
Electro-Harmonix

VOL 27 NO 2 ON SALE 02 OCT

•Contents are subject to change

New music

We round up and rate a selection of this month's guitar-driven releases and reissues

ALBUM OF THE MONTH

Iron Maiden

THE BOOK OF SOULS

This is Maiden's first double album and, as such, offers a daunting amount of material; a complete listen-through requires several cups of tea to achieve. The appeal of the shorter tracks, such as the magnificently old-school *Speed Of Light*, is undeniable, but there's much to enjoy from some of the longer tracks, too. The 18-minute *Empire Of The Clouds* flies by, although *The Red And The Black* and *The Great Unknown* do drag ponderously in places. Adrian Smith carries the torch for the band's guitar triumvirate with some inspirational playing. His phrasing and Schenker-style vibrato are constant highlights and, during *Death Or Glory*, he even dusts off a slide. In contrast, the usually exuberant Dave Murray is somewhat restrained, while Janick Gers' contributions are as marmite as ever. Casual listeners will likely find the going tough, but this is a legendary band doing their thing with aplomb. SB

7/10

TRY IF YOU LIKE *Dream Theater, Judas Priest*

The Libertines

ANTHEMS FOR DOOMED YOUTH

The Libertines' noir soap opera, having covered imprisonment, addiction, acrimonious splits and brief reunions, takes an unexpected twist with this comeback album. Recorded in Thailand with Ed Sheeran producer Jake Gosling, it's – perhaps wisely – not an attempt to relive the nihilistic charge of 2002 debut *Up The Bracket*. The pace is largely slower, with the subject matter mostly autobiographical – documenting mid-life crises and cold turkey, while lamenting lost youth. There are a handful of exhilarating moments that remind us of the band who, alongside American cousins The Strokes, jolted indie music out of the post-Britpop hangover. The triumphant chorus of *Gunga Din* and the scratchy, ramshackle *Heart Of The Matter* recall the good old days, but the short verdict on The Libs' return is: not as bad as we might have feared, but not as good as we dared to hope. **GW**

7/10

TRY IF YOU LIKE *The Kinks, Blur*

Richard Hawley

HOLLOW MEADOWS

The tremolo-drenched wall of sound that characterised Hawley's 2012 album *Standing At The Sky's Edge* is shelved for the Sheffield singer-songwriters's eighth long-player. Instead, we find Hawley in wisened, world-weary form, crooning gently over more ornate compositions. His playing on yearning opener *I Still Want You* is a thing of beauty, accompanied by a lush bed of strings. *Long Time Down* has a Johnny Cash feel and *Serenade Of Blue* is a becalming lullaby with lilting slide playing. The production does occasionally become more grand and expansive – the pastoral waltz of *Sometimes I Feel* reaches a stunning choral finish, and Hawley lets rip a little with his soloing on the glorious, confessional *Heart Of Oak*. 15 years into a solo career of consistently refined quality, this is another release that underlines Hawley's place as a national treasure. **GW**

9/10

TRY IF YOU LIKE *Scott Walker, Johnny Cash*

Kurt Vile

B'LIEVE I'M GOIN DOWN

This sixth solo album from the former War On Drugs guitarist is a laconic, lo-fi treasure. Its dreamy acoustic stylings see Vile also take on piano, Farfisa organ and strings duties, with songwriting that's a road trip through American musical history. These sparse arrangements are adorned with lap steel and banjo flourishes, and the whole thing drifts by in the most beautifully sedating fashion. **GW**

8/10

TRY IF YOU LIKE *Neil Young, The War On Drugs*

Gary Clark Jr

THE STORY OF SONNY BOY SLIM

Melding vintage electric blues with contemporary R&B, soul and hip-hop influences, Gary Clark Jr shares Dan Auerbach's love of fuzz as well as his eclecticism, though the production on GCJ's second major label LP is considerably less retro than the work of The Black Keys' mainman. While his mainstream debut felt a little indecisive, this is a confident and more relaxed step forward from a fine player. **CV**

8/10

TRY IF YOU LIKE *The Black Keys, Prince*

The Arcs

YOURS DREAMILY

Aside from fronting The Black Keys, prolific production work and his solo career, Dan Auerbach somehow found time to form a new band for this side-project. While his familiar impeccable fuzzy blues tone shines throughout, this is a more experimental record, laced with curious samples, leftfield recording techniques and pyschedelic inflections – and the result is all the more worthy of discovery. **GW**

8/10

TRY IF YOU LIKE *The Black Keys, Tame Impala*

Reissue spotlight

McAlmont & Butler

THE SOUND OF MCALMONT & BUTLER

Following the dissolution of his pioneering partnership with Brett Anderson, former Suede guitar hero Bernard Butler wasn't quite ready to hang up that iconic Gibson ES-355. Forging a new creative union with the vocal powerhouse David McAlmont, the pair unleashed a barrage of unforgetable glam-meets-soul singles and ultimately an album – remastered here 20 years on by Mr Butler himself from the original tapes. In song terms. the obvious T-Rex in the room is *Yes* which, quite possibly, is one of the finest pieces of songwriting to emerge from the 90s. The juxtaposition between the wall of sound production, gloriously bright chords, euphoric Judy Garland-inspired melody and the sassy, biting lyrics is sublime, as is McAlmont's remarkably dexterous voice. Other highlights include second single *You Do* and the snappy *What's The Excuse This Time?* A jam-packed bonus disc offers a fascinating insight into the making of *Yes*, with the original four-track demo included, as well as an instrumental. Other nuggets of interest to fans of the duo are aplenty, including a DVD featuring new performances. AP

9/10

TRY IF YOU LIKE *Suede (pre-94), McAlmont & Nyman*

Interview Bernard Butler

We had a chat with Bernard Butler about the release of this remastered classic...

What motivated you to go back and remaster the album and give it the deluxe treatment?
"A few years ago, I was alerted, via a Twitter account called @1palbumclub, that you could buy this record on Amazon for as little as one penny. The sleeve was incorrect on digital services. EMI, the then-owners, refused to do a reissue to get it back to normal price, and it took until Universal had bought the catalogue to start the process again. It took four years for Demon to get a licence to put this out and allow me to reassemble the whole thing. In the meantime, we played some shows last year, which reminded us of how cherished some of the music is, seemingly without our having noticed before. I was always fond of the way this record was quite eccentric beyond the hits, and that is what I was keen for people to rediscover. But it's been a true labour of love, phenomenal work, and also outlines how farcical a record company can be that it would rather have a record on sale for 1p than go through some red tape to have it at full price."

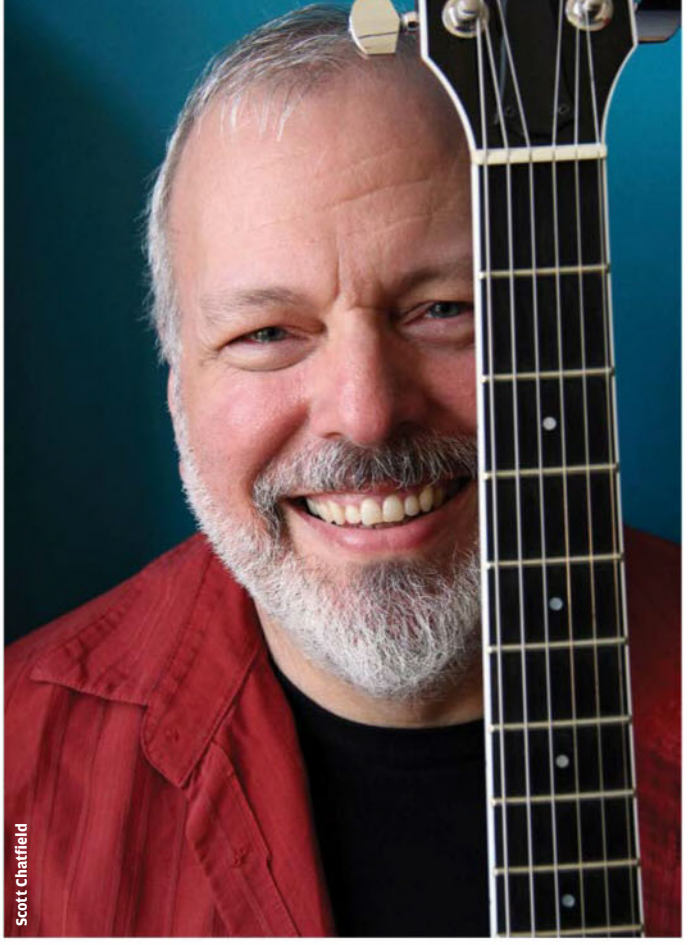
Did you primarily use the 355 on this record? What was your set-up during this era?
"There was lots of 355, Tele and Les Paul, mainly. I was using AC30s, but also my Boogie MkIII and the Les Paul for the solo on *How About You?*, a Selmer Zodiac (*The Debitor*) and an ancient Ampeg combo, which weighed a ton and belonged to RAK (*Tonight*). *Yes* uses the 355, with AC30s and a Leslie cabinet for the chorus-y parts, and also some Les Paul on the choruses and outro. I was also using a valve Watkins Copicat for almost everything at the time as a preamp, as well as for echo. The intro to *Tonight* is my 355 mic'd up with a KM84 taped onto the f-hole."

The album contains *Yes*, an incredible piece of music. What do you think it is about this song that gives it such lasting appeal?
"Musically, I had a lucky afternoon! I stumbled on some lovely key changes, which are almost unnoticeable but give the feeling of unexpected changes. There is the feeling of euphoria and defiance from the off with the drum parts and the high violin line. The most amazing part is I met somebody completely unexpectedly, who took the piece of music I described and within two days had interpreted it with complete accuracy. The feelings David expressed in those few words say everything I was saying in the music. It was a very pure statement from the moment I started writing string parts, through to hearing him sing it back in the studio. I think that pure aesthetic is ingrained in the record, and people constantly go back to it to find that feeling in their own lives. The most common comment we get is 'that song makes me feel better!' – and being part of that for other people is very special."

When you're playing these songs live today, do you make changes to the arrangements?
"The recordings are pretty live and loose, and although I'll stick to the structures, there is plenty of room for everyone to move with the parts. We don't learn anything religiously, but there are very specific things I insist the band learn. Around that, they can move quite a lot. I don't have the greatest patience for learning solos I played 20 years ago, so I tend to get it into my head and just have fun. I'm allowed to! As long as Mako's behind me, I feel I can do anything!"

A lazy assumption is McAlmont & Butler were a Britpop band, but if you could describe 'the sound' of the duo, what would you say?
"This record came from that time, but I'm pretty confident it doesn't represent that generic sound – and I'm relieved with that! At the time, I was very set on challenging musically what I was doing, and would never have been happy to have the music slot into a movement, so a lot of it was obtusely trying to stay away from what was going on. The era wasn't just marked by the sound of the music, but the way groups were packaged and sold in such a blunt way – and, again, we tried to present this music in a deliberately underplayed way. The ethos was deliberately about 'the sound'. It was important people would remember it for what they heard and little else."

Are McAlmont & Butler back for good? Can we expect the long-awaited third album?
"We never went anywhere! We never finished our third record. Things got in the way and still do distract us both, but my rough aim is to at least finish it next year. We should have a few new songs in the tour setlist this November."


Scott Chatfield

MIKE KENEALLY

"My Spinal Tap moment..."

Former Frank Zappa and Steve Vai guitarist talks comic strips, flamenco guitars and The Beatles...

1 I couldn't live without my...
"I don't believe there is one – I enjoy switching things up and I'm happy to recycle guitars with a fair degree of promiscuity – but the first thing I thought of was the green Clapton Strat I've been playing since 1988. If there's a signature Keneally instrument, that's got to be the one. But my guitar crush at the moment is a chambered, beautiful SG-style thing that was built for me earlier this year by Black Devil Guitars."

2 In another life, I would be...
"Probably a cartoonist. Every once in a while, I get an urge to try to develop a comic strip, but I don't have the time or spare energy to devote to it."

3 The band that started it all...
"Most likely *I Want To Hold Your Hand*, off my sister's copy of *Meet The Beatles* when I was four years old, was the song that first made fireworks shoot off in my head, and I began to get a glimpse of music's transforming power."

4 The one that got away...
"The Tobias Lacewood 5-string bass that Bryan Beller played on my *Boil That Dust Speck* album. It was stolen out of his apartment at the end of 1994, and none of us have ever completely recovered from it. Bryan has produced many a wonderful bass tone since then, but that was a major loss."

5 My Spinal Tap moment...
"I'm not sure how Spinal Tap-y it was, but it wasn't great to leave $400 of per diem in my hotel room, when I was a puppy during the opening weeks of the Frank Zappa 1988 tour, and not realise it until the band were at an airport preparing to board. The tour had to send a car to retrieve the money, and Frank made fun of me about it during the show that night. I learned never to put anything of value in a hotel room drawer, because I absolutely *will* forget that it's there."

6 The best advice I've ever been given...
"At a Frank Zappa rehearsal, I was trying to execute an insane guitar passage from *Drowning Witch* on an unplugged guitar; I kept playing it, and with each failed attempt I would bear down harder, tense myself up more, and fail even worse. From about 200 yards, the drummer, Chad Wackerman, took note, and walked over slowly until his face was about an inch from mine, and he said with quiet intensity: "RELAX". It was a pivotal moment that I've replayed in my head thousands of times since."

7 The first thing I play when I pick up a guitar...
"Some sort of syncopated pull-off-oriented lick on the bottom three strings. It's never quite the same. Someday, I should record a medley of all the different variations."

8 The most important thing on my rider...
"Water!"

9 My guiltiest musical pleasure...
"Aw, I'm not guilty about any of it, but I listen almost exclusively in the car to music recorded at least 40 years ago – sometimes I wish I would devote myself to experiencing more current music, but I'm always fascinated to listen to music from my youth and see how my present-day mind processes it. I always learn something. I'm enjoying Sweet Billy Pilgrim, Godsticks, Janet Feder, Dane Runyon, Flying Lotus... also Jamie Kime's new solo debut, *Alleys*, which I produced with him, is a motherfucker of an album."

10 If I could learn to play one thing...
"It would be incredibly centering to learn flamenco guitar; my fingers sometimes go out of control when I'm improvising. If my fingers were flamenco-trained, I think I'd execute that stuff in the moment with more clarity. A few months after the 1988 Zappa band broke up, Frank surprised me one night by asking, 'you think you could learn to play flamenco guitar?' He was interested in forming a kind of world music band. The band never happened, but this question has got me thinking about it."

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